



STUDENTS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR DEMOCRACY IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA 1995-2005: WITH A FOCUS ON SENEGAL AND ZIMBABWE

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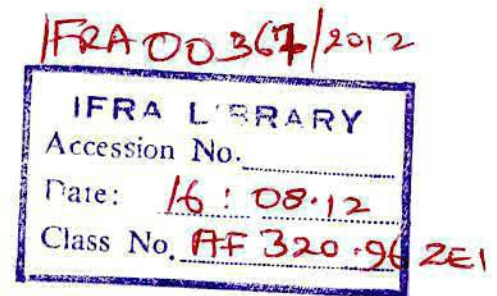
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Students and the struggle for democracy in sub-Saharan Africa 1995-2005: with a focus on Senegal and Zimbabwe

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Thesis

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Abstract

This thesis examines students as agents of political change in sub-Saharan Africa. It explores the extent to which students exercise political agency, and the ways in which opportunities for agency are shaped by historical and geographical circumstances. It is argued that in post-colonial Africa students are, in many respects, politically privileged actors. This is attributable to a host of factors including the relative weaknesses of other social groups; the cultural status of education; the small numbers who make it to university; their shared identity with political leadership; the need of the state for graduates and the nature of campus life. However, structural factors intervene, shaping a wider political and economic context and the way students exercise agency. These processes are today associated with globalisation and related to the neo-liberal agenda of international financial institutions (IFIs); World Bank pressures on education systems and the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Within these wider structural changes students do, however, exercise political agency to a varied extent.

The two case studies in the thesis are based on interviews with leading student activists and archival research and focus on similar moments of political activism. In the late 1990s both Zimbabwe and Senegal underwent important 'transitions'. In Zimbabwe it resulted in the formation of a mass party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), in 1999 after a period of widespread social protests. As the regime regained momentum after the formation of the MDC the 'transition' became increasingly frustrated. Student activists were involved in each stage of this political ferment. Although Senegal did not see mass mobilisation, the country experienced an important 'electoral transition'. The ruling *Parti Socialiste* (PS) was overturned for the first time since independence in presidential elections in March 2000 by an opposition coalition. University students played a vital role in the *changement politique* that shook Senegal during this period. By focusing on these moments of student activism the research shows how students shape and are shaped by national processes of political change and popular protest and have maintained a role as politically privileged actors.

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Acronyms

ADEMA	Alliance pour la Démocratie en Mail
AEEM	Association des Elèves et Etudiants du Mail
AEMUD	Association des Etudiants Musulmans de l'Université de Dakar
AES	Association des Etudiants Sénégalais
AFCA	Alliance des Forces du Changement pour l'Alternance
AFP	Alliance des Forces du Progrès
AG	Assemblée Générale
AGED	Association Générale des Etudiants de Dakar
AGES	Association Générale des Etudiants Sénégalais
AMEAN	Association Musulmane des Etudiants d'Afrique Noire
ANC	African National Congress (Zimbabwe)
And-Jeff/Pads	Parti Africain pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme
AOF	Afrique-Occidentale Franchise
BRC	Bloc Républicain pour le Changement
BTTC	Belvedere Teachers Training College
CAFA	Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa
CED	Coordination des Etudiants de Dakar
CES	Coordination des Elèves du Sénégal
CESTI	Centre d'Etudes des Sciences et Techniques de l'Information
CFA	Communauté Financière Africaine
CGC	Comite de Gestion de Crise
CIP	Comite d'Initiative et de Pilotage
CJPO	Coordination des Jeunesses Politiques de l'Opposition
CNTS	Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Sénégal
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
COUD	Centre des Oeuvres Universitaires de Dakar
CSTS	Coordination des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Supérieur
CUR	Collèges Universitaires Régionaux
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
EFI	Ecole de Formation des Instituteurs
ENS	Ecole Normale Supérieure
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
FEAF	Fédération des Etudiants d'Afrique Noire en France
FLSH	Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines
FRE	Front pour la Régularité des Elections
FSJP	Faculté des Sciences Juridiques et Politiques
FSM	Free Speech Movement
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GMI	Groupement Mobile d'Intervention
HIT	Harare Institute of Technology
IFAN	Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
ILO	International Labour Organisation

IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISO	International Socialist Organisation
LD/MPT	Ligue Démocratique/Mouvement pour le Parti du Travail
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
MEEL	Mouvement des Elèves et Etudiants Libéraux
MEES	Mouvement des Elèves et Etudiants Socialiste
MMD	Movement for Multi-Party Democracy
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NDP	National Democratic Party
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NURS	National Union of Rhodesian Students
NUST	National University of Science and Technology
NSS	National Strategic Studie
NWPC	National Working Peoples Convention
NYS	National Youth Service
PAES	Programme d'Amélioration de L'Enseignement Supérieur
PAI	Parti Africain de l'Indépendance
PDEF	Programme Décennal d'Education et de Formation
PDS	Parti Démocratique Sénégalaise
PIT	Parti de l'Indépendance et du Travail
POSA	Public Order and Security Act
PRA	Parti du Regroupement Africain
PS	Parti Socialiste
SAES	Syndicat Autonome des Enseignants du Supérieur
SANCO	South African National Civic Organisation
SAP	Structural Adjustment Programme
SAP	Students Against Privatisation
SECC	Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee
SRANC	Southern Rhodesian African National Congress
SRC	Student Representative Council
SRTUC	Southern Rhodesian Trade Union Congress
SST	Student Solidarity Trust
UCAD	Université Cheikh Anta Diop
UDES	Union Démocratique des Etudiants Sénégalais
UED	Union des Etudiants de Dakar
UDF	Union pour la Démocratie et le Fédéralisme
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UDPM	Union Démocratique du Peuple Malien
UGB	Université Gaston Berger
UGEAO	Union Générale des Etudiants d'Afrique de l'Ouest
UGED	Union Générale des Etudiants de Dakar
UNAPES	Union Nationale Patriotique des Etudiants Sénégalais
UNEAQ	Union Générale des Etudiants d'Afrique de l'Ouest
UNTS	Union Nationale des Travailleurs Sénégalais
URD	Union pour le Renouveau Démocratique
UVA	Université Virtuelle Africaine
UZ	University of Zimbabwe
WAC	Wade pour l'Alternance avec la Coalition
WASU	West African Student Union

WB	World Bank
WPC	Working Peoples Convention
ZANLA	Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army
ZANU-PF	Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front
ZAPU	Zimbabwe African Peoples Union
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZICSU	Zimbabwe Congress of Student Unions
ZIMPREST	Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation
ZINASU	Zimbabwe National Student Union
ZIPRA	Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army
ZYDT	Zimbabwe Youth Democracy Trust

Chapter 1

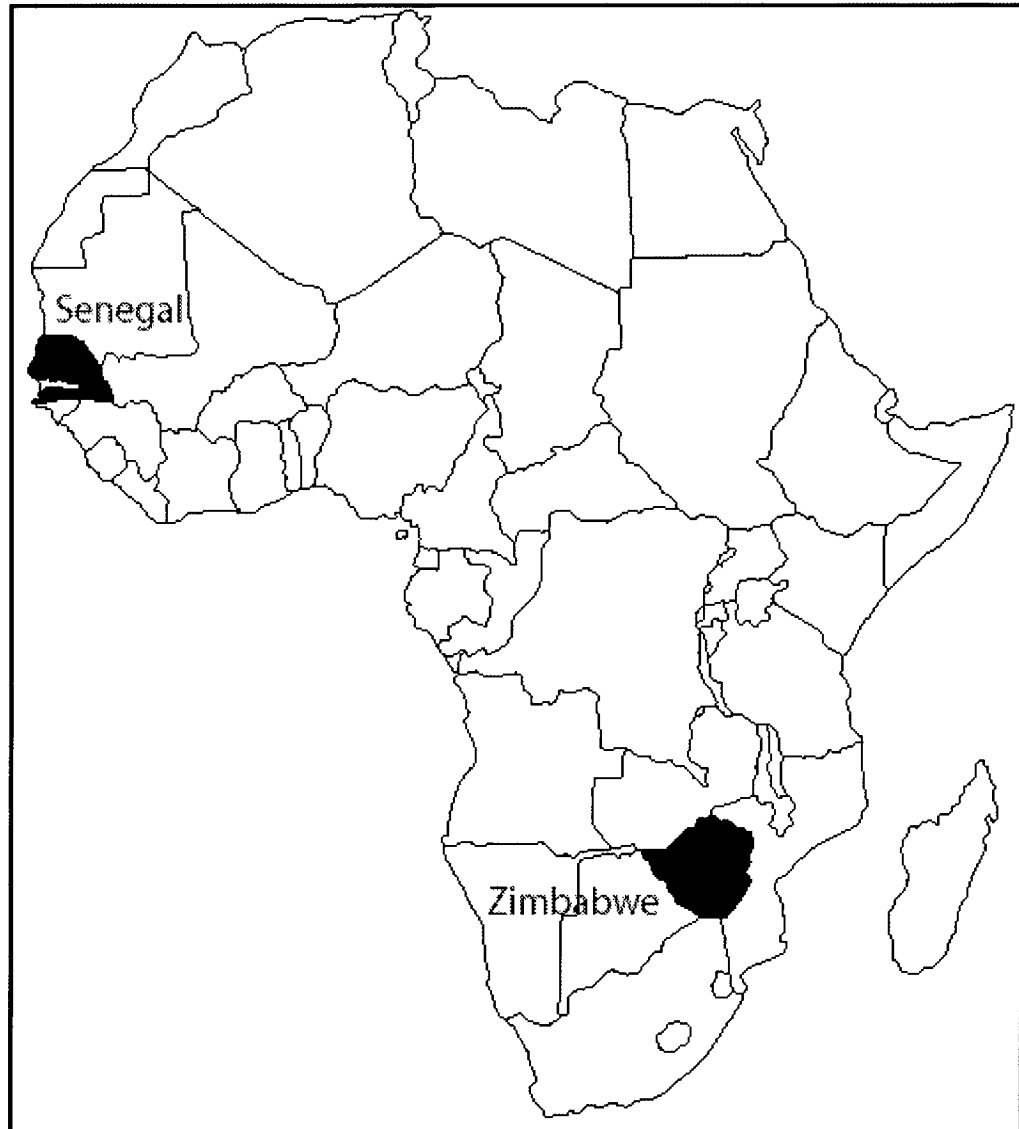
Introduction

1:1 ‘Insurgent architects’

This thesis examines students as agents of political change in sub-Saharan Africa. It explores the extent to which students exercise political agency, the ways in which they do so, and the ways in which opportunities for agency are shaped by historical and geographical circumstances. It is argued that in post-colonial Africa students have what is, in many respects, a politically privileged status. This is attributable to a host of factors including the relative weaknesses of other social groups (see Cliff, 1963); the cultural status of education (educational fetishism) (Bianchini, 2004); the small numbers who make it to university; their shared identity with political leadership; the need of the state for graduates; and the nature of campus life. However other spatio-temporal factors intervene, shaping wider political and economic contexts and the way students exercise agency (e.g. privatisation within the university, graduate unemployment and student loans) and the students’ privileged access to political power (through, for instance, declining time and money available for political activity, cooptation and the commodification of resistance). Many of these structural elements are associated with the processes of neo-liberal globalisation (Renton, 2001), World Bank pressures on education systems, the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and regulation of international travel. However, within these wider structural changes students do exercise agency to a varied extent.

The thesis considers two case studies of this activism, during what is often described as the ‘democratic transition’ (Wiseman, 1996; Bratton, 1997; Clark and Gardinier, 1997). The first is associated with the popular protests that led to the creation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in Zimbabwe in 1999, and the four years of frustrated transition that followed. The second case study covers a similar period in Senegal, where Abdoulaye Wade won democratic elections in 2000, defeating the ruling Parti

Map 1:1 Locations of Senegal and Zimbabwe



Socialiste for the first time since independence. Students played a central role in the campaign for *changement* throughout the 1990s, though the focus here is on the period from 1999. The research has a narrow focus on the activism of university students, and specifically students in two national institutions, the University of Zimbabwe in Harare and Cheikh Anta Diop Université in Dakar. These changes were part of a ‘second wave’ of democratic struggles that were “linked to political opposition and aimed at

governments and even regimes, as much as it was at specific economic policies” (Seddon and Zeilig, 2005: 18).

The most cursory survey of post-colonial African politics reveals an astonishing level of student action. Student activists have been able to project their demands, voices and movements repeatedly onto the national scene; their action has been amplified beyond their actual numbers. A section of society – frequently much less than 2 per cent of the age cohort – repeatedly achieves national prominence. In the first years of independence university students could be characterised as a pampered section of society, being educated to run the post-colonial state. But within a very brief period they became oppositional, regarded in the literature of the day as “rival politicians rather than students” (Hanna, 1975:13). Student militants frequently fuelled the early protest movements that questioned the legitimacy of the new states. Many commentators regarded them as a democratic vanguard, powered by left-wing ideology. In later years the literature despaired at their activism, regarding student politics in Africa as non-ideological and fighting daily struggles for government handouts (Bathily *et al*, 1994; Cruise O’Brien, 1996).

Between independence in 1960 and the mid-1970s university students were part of a privileged and transitory social group, waiting to be allotted graduate employment in an expanding civil service and across the state sector. Some commentators described them as members of Africa’s intelligentsia or ‘new’ *petite bourgeoisie* (see Mamdani, 1994; Mandaza, 1980). The period corresponded to a moment of state-led development across much of the continent. Students were overwhelmingly well funded, living comfortably on government grants and scholarships. By the mid-1970s this picture was beginning to unravel. In tandem with the economic crisis that led to a collapse in the price of primary commodities in the 1970s, university provision began to decline (Zeilig, 2002a). Students saw the level of grants fall and their privileged conditions crumble. By the mid-1980s under the impact of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) students had to a large extent been proletarianised, and according to some observers they comprised part of the ‘new popular classes’ (Frederici, 2000; Seddon, 2002) who helped to empower many of the political protests (and democratic transitions) throughout the 1980s and 1990s. As one study explains:

According to the World Bank statistics, by 1986, 36% of the parents of African university students were farmers, and 21% were manual workers and traders, which makes the African university student body the one with the smallest percentage of white-collar parents (40%) in the world (Frederici, 2000: 93).

This study focuses on the later period of their evolution, and particularly the convergence of forces between students and the popular classes in the 1990s. However their activism is only understandable when viewed historically as a transition from an early post-independent elitism.

This thesis situates itself in the debates on agency and structure (Giddens, 1991) and makes explicit use of a historical-geography (although it draws on an inter-disciplinary approach). The theoretical argument at the centre of the thesis is summarised well by Harvey (2000). Harvey argues that social change (however utopian) must be embedded in historical-geographical realities, and that these realities (or ‘structures’) are social facts that agency must negotiate (and influence and change). Paraphrasing Marx, Harvey (2000: 253-4) writes “we can always aspire to make our own historical-geography but never under historical-geographical conditions of our own choosing ... the leap from the present into some future is always constrained”. These constraints are the backdrop from which agency attempts to make and remake historical and geographical conditions.

This is not, however, the relegation of agency to pre-determined conditions (structures). The agent of social change (Harvey’s ‘insurgent architects’) is an “embodied person” (Harvey, 2000: 234) who occupies a unique space for a particular time – the “spatio-temporality of human life.” Agents of social change are not able to fashion a new world as they want, rather they are embodied in a spatiotemporal order that can “hold us to some degree apart from this fluid and open conception in our thought and practices” (Harvey, 2000: 236).

The agents of social change considered in this study are university students. But even the term student demands further explanation. This thesis discusses the activism of university (and, in the case of Zimbabwe, also polytechnic) students and the literature that has attempted to understand them. This is not an accidental choice. The activism and organisation of university students in sub-Saharan Africa is distinct in academic

literature (Caffentzis *et al*, 2000) and in its political and social significance (Bianchini, 2004) from that of other students. There are dangers in making general statements about sub-Saharan Africa, however the thesis does argue for a broad – and indeed global – conception of political and economic change. Williams (2004: 576-7) argues there is a requirement for detailed and inter-disciplinary research in the study of African realities and researchers must be aware of the danger of dissolving “regional specificities into comparative propositions” that gather up disparate phenomena into a “generalizing basket.”

These concerns need to be highlighted more thoroughly. It is vital to stress that the topic of university students and the struggle for democracy in Africa is a large field, and one that warrants further research. Conclusions in this thesis therefore are consistent with the available secondary literature; however further research is likely to lead to a more nuanced account. Africa is a complex continent, divided by distinct political and economic histories. For example South Africa is in some respect an exception to many of the political and economic changes discussed in the thesis. One can anticipate that a study of students in South Africa, in particular, would add a new layer of complexity to the research on sub-Saharan student activism.

There is an additional theoretical concern for the thesis that is linked to the approach outlined above. The ‘student voice’ – the crucial agency of the ‘democratic transitions’ – is invisible in the recent and historical accounts of student movements (Bathily, 1992; Caffentzis *et al*, 2000; Edelman Boren, 2000; Nyamnjoh and Jua, 2002). This thesis is written in the tradition of ‘history from below’ (Thompson, 1991) and as a consequence it places the student’s individual and collective experiences (that “bundle of emotions, desires, concerns and fears”) (Harvey, 2000: 234) at the centre of the histories retold here.

1:2 Arguments and questions

The background to the thesis takes place in two distinct, though dependent worlds. The first saw students form a vital element of pre-independent nationalist struggle in sub-Saharan Africa (Cliff, 1963). They formed part of the ‘intelligentsia’ made up of university educated graduates, students, civil servants working in the colonial apparatus

and trade union bureaucrats (see chapter 3), they were able to play this role because of the relative organisational and political weaknesses of other social groups in society (Bianchini, 2004). They were political modernisers, who were going to bring development to the new states. Students were 'politically privileged actors'. Students continued to play a politically privileged role after independence, through the early years of state-led development and in an adjusted form through the economic crisis in the 1970s.

From the late 1970s the continent was punctuated by protest, politics and resistance, from which the transitions examined in the thesis, would eventually emerge from. This forms the second backdrop of the two periods in the study. It was during these years that state-led policies of development unravelled under the combined pressure of international recession and what is today fashionably termed poor governance (Abrahamsen, 2000). The effect of these dramatic changes was to bring about a period of global readjustment that in many parts of the African continent involved the implementation of World Bank and International Monetary Fund structural adjustment programmes (Renton, 2001). The austerity measures associated with these programmes had a dramatic effect on the continent (including a sustained attack on university education). Some writers have noted how these measures brought about a (first) wave of political protest (Zeilig and Seddon, 2002). Labelled bread riots, they brought together wide coalitions of mostly urban protestors (Walton and Seddon, 1994).

The second wave of protests was more explicitly political and organised than the first. Developing in the late 1980s this second wave of protests spread across many countries on the continent (Dwyer and Seddon, 2002). These movements were often organised by powerful opposition parties, or newly created coalitions. University students were vital elements of these movements (see chapter 3) which were part of a wave of democratic and popular resistance, amounting to, in Celestin Monga's (1996) words, the 'collective insubordination' of Africa against structural adjustment and parasitic governments. Locating students in these movements, and describing the historical context of them is not a secondary exercise. Far from being incidental to the research it forms the central canvas on which students exercised political agency. The movements for change in Senegal and Zimbabwe (both organised around the slogan 'change') were part of this

wave of protest, and student activists among the most enthusiastic advocates for political transformation.

The research examines the experiences of students in both countries, through the period of protest and mobilisation. There are four broad and connected questions for the thesis. How can student activism in sub-Saharan Africa be understood, and to what extent are students still politically privileged actors? Can students exercise meaningful agency in the face of global pressures? Does political agency require a coherent political philosophy? And if so, to what extent are students able to achieve this, constrained as they are by structural conditions? These questions are examined in a range of contexts that have emerged from the two case studies: students' ability to engage with other groups in society, the level of participation in student politics, the manipulation of student politics by external forces and the presence of an independent ideology in the student movement.

1:3 Situating the research

Two important studies have emerged in recent years that directly impinge on this thesis. The first is a collection of essays and studies by Frederici *et al*, (2000) that acknowledges African universities and student activism as crucial arenas in the struggles for democratisation and political change. The second study is the first general history of university student activism, Mark Edelman Boren's (2001) history of *Student Resistance*. Both, of course, follow a developed body of research on both student resistance and the predicament of African universities (for examples see Hanna and Hanna, 1975; Lebeau, 1997). They, however, form a vital and important contemporary commentary on the role of students and the peculiarities (and similarities) of their activism in sub-Saharan Africa. This thesis directly engages with this work and both extends and contests some of the conclusions reached in the recent literature.

This thesis makes an original contribution to the field in several ways. Although university student activism has in recent years been the subject of important research (e.g. Nyamnjoh and Jua 2002), most of these studies have been descriptive rather than seriously analytical. While they give very good accounts of the role of student action

across many sub-Saharan African universities, none provide a satisfactory explanation of the reasons for the peculiarly prominent role students continue to play in national politics, preferring to explain the micro processes of student organisation or to see students simply as manipulated by cynical politicians and fighting each other on an ethnic basis (e.g. Konings, 2002). However, Mills (2004: 671) is right to lament the lack of serious research into the recent phases of student activism: “Given the key role student politics has played in the post-colonial history of the African state, one would like to know more about this new phase of student activism.” Many suggest (Bathily *et al*, 1995) that with the privatisation of higher education students have ceased to play their historic role and have become, instead, paralysed by the neo-liberal crisis and motivated only by a desire to “secure a place in a fragile post-university job market” (Mills, 2004: 671).

The thesis brings together the work on student activism and the processes commonly (and controversially) described today as democratisation (Abrahamsen, 2000; Saul, 2003). Secondly, it penetrates the dynamics of student protests in two in-depth case studies through the words of student activists themselves (who are invisible in the existing literature) and provides a fresh theoretical approach that elucidates the crucial agency of social change in the democratic transitions. In this way the study foregrounds the role of students, and provides an original analysis and theoretical framework for understanding student activism in sub-Saharan Africa (the student voice, marginalised and often completely ignored elsewhere, is the primary witness to the social change described in the thesis). Consequently, the historical-geography of the democratic struggles in Zimbabwe and Senegal are not told “through the carefully modulated words of politicians and intellectuals, but in the often rough, earnest cadences” of student activists (Siegelbaum and Walkowitz, 1995: 1). Finally the thesis seeks to draw together the seemingly disparate experiences in Senegal and Zimbabwe.

Certain ideas in the thesis, and in this chapter, have been developed in other places. I edited a collection of essays on protest and resistance in Africa (Zeilig, 2002a), and although they are not directly linked to the phenomenon of student action they deal with a political and economic context that has informed much of this study. I have described the student strike in Senegal in 2001, a key moment in the evolution of activism after the election of Abdoulaye Wade (Zeilig, 2002c), and this description parties elaborated

further in chapter 5. Similarly the historical background to Zimbabwe's crisis appeared in the *International Socialism Journal* (Zeilig, 2002b), and has helped in the development of the first part of chapter 4. Two further journal articles have directly drawn on ideas from this thesis. The first is an article on the Senegalese student movement since the *alternance* (the political transfer of power in 2000), 'En quête de changement politique: la mobilisation étudiante au Sénégal, 2000-2004' that appeared in the French journal of African Studies *Politique Africaine* (Zeilig, 2005). The second article appeared in the *Review of African Political Economy* and deals more directly with some of the theoretical issues associated with the use of a Marxist epistemology in understanding protest in Africa, and was co-written with David Seddon (Seddon and Zeilig, 2005).

1:4 Theoretical considerations

This thesis is about social change, and its theoretical considerations centre on the role of agency. Agency can be attributed to the collective actors (e.g. the student movement and its organisation and unions) but crucially also to individuals. These collective groups and the individuals who comprise them are at the core of the thesis and the political change (democratic transitions) that they helped to bring about. Therefore the theoretical heart of this thesis centres (even if it does not rest here) around Marx's classic comment that: "men make their own history, but do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past" (Marx, 1984:10). In the context of the transitions in Zimbabwe and Senegal, what does this really mean? To what extent are students making history? What are the circumstances (structures) that they encounter and how do these constrain and/or empower their activism? A deeper examination of these theoretical questions can be found in chapter 2; however it is important to sketch the contours of the theory underpinning the thesis here.

Although the thesis emphasises the activism of students who participated in the two moments of democratic struggle and change in sub-Saharan Africa, it regards these individual militants and their activism as embedded in a political, economic and social world. This creates a dynamic tension between the inherited structures constantly

constraining (and offering opportunities to) collective actors seeking to effect social change (Anderson, 1983). The thesis makes an explicit appeal to the *subjectivities of resistance* but only in the context of a specific and pre-existing historical-geography (Keith, 1997: 284). The thesis can be seen as an historical and geographical study on how students bring about social and political change, in “circumstances directly encountered.”

The dynamic relationship between agency and structure means that the inherited world does not simply oppress the present, weighing “like a nightmare on the brain of the living” (Marx, 1984: 10), but it is also transformed by those individuals engaged in collective activism. The lives of the students in this thesis are not considered in isolation, but in the vital social and political context they encountered and sought to change (Ginzburg, 1993). This vital context has long preoccupied geographers (Harvey, 1989; Lefebvre, 1991) who have sought to ground social change in specific historical-geographies. Resistance can emerge in certain counter-hegemonic spaces – Lefebvre’s *spaces of representation* – “which allow challenges to the dominant order” (Blunt and Wills, 2000: 77).

Therefore the concerns of the thesis are both *macro* and *micro*: the motivation of individual activists, involved in the democratic transitions, *and* the broader political and economic worlds they were forced to negotiate. The methods used to uncover these experiences, and to explore this micro world, are various. Extensive use of oral testimony (principally interviews and life histories) are combined in the study with an attention to the historical-geographical macro world. The study is a fusion of personal experiences of the struggles that gripped Zimbabwe and Senegal and broad political and economic structures.

Social change, therefore, is at least partly made by students and the popular resistance of which they were increasingly an important element. To some, these may seem obvious observations, however, for too long history has been seen as made by great individuals, as though “only political, constitutional and administrative history is real history” (Hill, 1995: 245). Thompson (1963: 11) in his famous study *The Making of the English Working Class* wrote that he was consciously “writing against the weight of prevailing orthodoxies.” These orthodoxies derived from various sources, one was the work of

“the empirical economic historians in which working people are seen as a labour force, as migrants, or as the data for statistical series.” Thompson’s quarrel with these histories is a vital signpost for this research: “They tend to obscure the agency of working people, the degree to which they contributed by conscious efforts, to the making of history ... Only the successful ... are remembered. The blind alleys, the lost causes; and the losers themselves are forgotten” (Thompson, 1963:11-12).

History from below has had some very forceful defenders (James, 1980; Ste Croix, 1981; Trotsky, 1992). Yet before the development of social history and the foundation of the *History Workshop Journal* in the 1960s, the overwhelming assumption was that political and social change came *from above* (Callinicos, 1998). This tendency in academic writing is not limited to the western academy (or to pre-1960 historical writing). On the contrary, the literature on African student movements is replete with these orthodoxies (Bathily *et al*, 1995; Cefkin, 1975), where the crucial agents are missing from their own histories. The indignant reader finds himself yelling, “Where is the protagonist? Where is the student?”¹

This thesis consequently takes Thompson’s historical method as its inspiration: “I am seeking to redeem the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the ‘obsolete’ hand-loom weaver, the ‘utopian’ artisan ... from the enormous condescension of posterity” (1991: 12). The attempt to restore the voice of the activist to the centre of the accounts of the democratic transition has been an overwhelming desire of mine since starting this research in Senegal in 2000. The focus is not by chance. The thesis is a sustained attempt against *forgetting* the anti-privatisation campaigns led by student activists at the National University of Science and Technology in Bulawayo (Zimbabwe) and the euphoria of those who organised them, or the way students travelled across Senegal before the final round of the presidential elections in 2000, in barely functioning buses in the middle of the night, to ensure that their villages and towns were mobilised to vote for the *changement politique* (see also Zeilig, 2004a). These are the histories told against a frequently hostile and seemingly unbending social world. The student’s determination to bend this world came from a refusal to believe in the inevitability (or impossibility) of their encountered circumstances, and this is one of the reasons why

¹ In Zimbabwe, however, there are two excellent recent examples of *history from below* that are referred to extensively in chapter 4 (Raftopoulos and Phimister, 1997; Raftopoulos and Sachikonye, 2001).

they were such an effective agent of social change in Zimbabwe and Senegal (and why I have an enduring interest in their activism). The *ideological tools* (organisations, initiative and leadership) that students used in the transitions were one of the ways that their agency was exercised, and is a central focus of the study. These students who are excluded by the orthodoxies Thompson detested at least in part make history in these case studies. In Hill's (1995: 245) words this is the "realisation that they may have played a greater part in determining the shape of the historical process whether for change or for continuity, than we have thought."

1:5 Summary of the thesis

The first four chapters of the thesis deal explicitly with the theoretical and methodological considerations of the thesis and the historical background to student activism in sub-Saharan Africa. This background tracks the evolution of student activism from independence in 1960, through structural adjustment and the democratic transitions in the 1990s. These chapters make substantial use of a historical literature rooted in early student movements and protest. Chapters 5 and 6 consider the two case studies, and use the primary data that was collected during fieldwork in Senegal and Zimbabwe.

Chapter 2 is divided into two sections. The first deals with the theoretical debates on structure and agency that have been alluded to above. It discusses how social change can emerge out of the tension between an agency constrained by pre-existing political, social and economic structures. The second part of the chapter focuses on the methodology employed in the research. It is here that I justify my attention to the student voice and the use of interviews from a theoretical basis. I detail some of the implications of using semi-structured interviews, oral testimony and case studies. This chapter considers the numerous complicating factors in the collection of material for this research in Zimbabwe, during the country's recent political crisis. During both periods of fieldwork the conditions for the researcher were – to put it very mildly – extremely difficult. In Zimbabwe I travelled on a tourist visa, and was subject to arrest and intimidation by the police and army. These difficulties reflected the crisis in Zimbabwe, but also the problematic nature of fieldwork for a white researcher with UK

nationality in a highly politicised (African) environment. These issues are explored in the chapter.

Chapter 3 sets the historical scene, examining the evolution of student activism. The principal contention of the chapter is that student action in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa has certain distinct features that make them politically privileged actors (a vital agency of social change). This is connected to their collective historical evolution from members of the pre-colonial intelligentsia. Only when students can be seen in this context, as evolving from their status as ‘unifiers of the nation’ (Cliff, 1963) can their subsequent development and activism be understood. The final sections of the chapter examine the historical-geography of the continent since the late 1970s during a process now known ubiquitously as ‘globalisation’ (Chomsky, 2000). This period brought about the “convergence of forces” (Kagoro, interview 23 June 2003) drawing in students and what have been termed the *popular classes* into successive waves of protest (Seddon, 2002; Dwyer and Seddon, 2005). Students in the 1990s had retained distinct features of an earlier period of political activism, but in a world that no longer resembled the one they had been promised. It was in an austere globalised world that student activists fought for political change in Senegal and Zimbabwe. The nature of these protests in a period of globalisation is described at the end of chapter 3. This forms the historical background through which the students who appear later in the study can be understood.

Chapter 4 surveys the literature that directly informs the research. One of the principal bodies of work covers the role of students, the nature of their protest and their relationships with civil society in the processes that brought about a wave of multi-party elections and democratic struggles in sub-Saharan Africa. The chapter focuses specifically on the literature that relates to student activism and protest, although it is acknowledged that their activism brings into play many other factors. The context within which students become political actors in contemporary Africa is tied to the transformation of higher education in the region. Higher education was seriously undermined, often under the auspices of IMF and World Bank-led reform. The chapter explores the changing nature of higher education in the political economy of sub-Saharan Africa.

Chapter 5 is taken up with the processes of political change and student activism in Zimbabwe, and it forms the first full case study. It is divided into three sections. It situates the rising tide of the student movement in two distinct spaces. The first was the contradictory experience after independence, which almost simultaneously saw both the massive expansion of higher education and at the same time a growing financial crisis that severely affected the new state from the late 1980s. Out of this contradiction emerged a vocal and militant opposition to the regime among student activists at the University of Zimbabwe. The first section deals with the political and social history of Zimbabwe, focusing on the recent period of political resistance since 1995. The second section looks at the evolution of student protest and activism through the 1970s and 1980s. The final part concentrates on the period of transition or the convergence of forces from 1995. It examines the dynamics of student action in the context of widening political unrest.

Chapter 6 follows a similar three-part structure and examines the trajectory of political and social change in Senegal. The first part of the chapter gives a brief description of political change since independence in 1960. The second part details the emergence of the student movement, and charts its development from a widely perceived heyday of political vanguardism in the 1960s and 1970s, to the crisis in higher education since the 1980s. The final part of the chapter covers the recent participation of students in the *changement politique* since 1998, focusing on the role of key student activists and groups; it charts the participation of students in Wade's *coalition alternance*. It then describes how student activists in the years that followed believe that they were co-opted and corrupted by a regime that they had laboured to elect.

Chapter 7 seeks to explain the meaning of student protest in the light of the empirical research questions, and brings the comparison between Senegal and Zimbabwe together. The synthesis of both studies demonstrates vital differences and similarities in the experience of both countries, and in the evolution of student activism in conditions of increasing poverty and underdevelopment. The chapter summarises the principal conclusions reached by the study, and returns to the role of student agency in the democratic transitions in sub-Saharan Africa, and argues that students there continue to play a privileged political role but in widely divergent movements.

Chapter 8 examines the evolution of the student intelligentsia discussed in chapter 2 and explores the evidence for a possible third wave of popular protests in the region connected to the development of the anti-capitalist movement. Some of the ideas presented here remain in some ways preliminary and as a consequence demand further careful research. Therefore, the thesis ends with recommendations for further research in this area.

Chapter 2

Researching students

2:1 Introduction

As noted in the previous chapter, social change is made ‘from below’ by those frequently excluded from what Thompson (1991) describes as the orthodoxies of official history. This thesis is an attempt to examine the activism of students in Zimbabwe and Senegal during the recent transitions by placing the experiences and motivations of the students, concealed in the literature, at the centre of the research. These arguments demand a theoretical justification.

The thesis argues that the lives and recent experiences of student activists are rooted in and partly conditioned by the highly structured world that they inherit. The first part of this chapter is an examination of the interaction between economic, social and political structures and individual and collective agency. It is argued that these structures impose important limitations on agency, although not necessarily determining ones (Keat and Urry, 1975). The arguments in this section make use of a Marxist epistemology to define and clarify the relationship between structure and agency. This is a key issue for the research, because if students are important agents of social change, then a consideration of both their activism and the historical-geographical background will illuminate how structure and agency really interact; in other words, how social change happens and what is the agency behind it. The second part of the chapter considers the consequences for the methodology, and examines in detail how the research was actually conducted.

2:2 Social change and students: structure and agency

This thesis is based on a particular understanding of ‘agency’ in the ‘democratic transitions’ in Zimbabwe and Senegal (and in sub-Saharan African more generally). The study identifies this agency (both individual and collective) as the force that ‘makes

history', responding to conditions that are not chosen by the political actors themselves. The ideas, motivations and beliefs that inform political actors are shaped and reshaped by their relationship with prevailing social structures (Dwyer, 2003: 40). However, Keith (1997: 284) argues that it is not sufficient to appeal to a notion of "geographies made by subjects though not in circumstances of their own choosing", there is the additional need to examine in detail the 'subjectivities of resistance', the motivations of individuals.

These debates have long preoccupied many writers, some whom have identified themselves with a Marxist epistemology (e.g. Thompson, 1978; 1991; Althusser, 1971; Callinicos, 1976). Certain critics argue that Marxism has never been able to explain the "relationship between structure and subject in human society" (Bradbury, 1988). The popular formulation of Marx's determinism is a passage in the 1859 *Preface to Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* in which he wrote:

The economic structure of society, the real foundation on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which **correspond** definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life **conditions** the general process of social, political and intellectual life ... the changes in the economic foundations lead **sooner or later** to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure (1981: 20-1, emphasis added).

Even this classic statement, often quoted to prove Marx's determinism, is peppered with conditional terms: 'correspond' and 'conditions'. But in order to understand Marx's method it is necessary to return to a passage quoted at the beginning of chapter 1 (see 4:1 above), "Men [sic] make their own history, but do not make it just as they please, they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves" (Marx, 1984:10). This statement emphasises a dynamic relationship (Rees, 1998; Lukas, 1971) between agency (men make history) and structure (not under circumstances that they have chosen). The individual is not displaced by this analysis – into a rigid and determined structure – but is understood as part of a dialectical and historic process. Therefore, some writers argue that the materialist concept of consciousness has agency in a fraught and contradictory relationship to the social circumstances that we 'directly encounter' (e.g. Rees, 1998).

It is in this context that we can understand Marx's statement that, "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness" (Marx, 1981: 21). This does not necessarily imply, as many have argued (e.g. Althusser, 1969), that our 'consciousness' is a simple reflection of 'social existence' but that pre-existing social conditions are the backdrop from which our consciousness ultimately derives. Society continues to exist even if we make a conscious effort to deny it. The potential for social change in Marxism, many argue (McGarr, 1994), is in the contradiction at the heart of a socially differentiated society and, without 'contradiction', the theory lapses into pre-determined generalisations about the world made by positivists and functionalists. These contradictions force us to confront 'unchosen circumstances' critically and actively. "It is the antagonisms which are the principle cause of progress" (Marx, quoted in Rees, 1998b: 265).

Therefore the thesis maintains the existence of real objects that can be analysed but only once there is an acknowledgement of the dialectical nature of this reality – fraught with hidden and exposed contradictions (see Trotsky, 1967: xvii-xxii). A number of important radical theorists have attempted to tackle these questions (Sayer, 1984; Keat and Urry, 1975; Bhaskar, 1979; Callinicos, 1982). They argue that scientific research is an attempt to examine the cause of events in terms of subterranean and unobservable structures, and that "the more apparent and observable features of social life [are] explicable in terms of these underlying structures" (Keat and Urry, 1975: 96).

Drawing upon these ideas, Lefebvre (1991) argues that agency – in his formulation the 'revolutionary working class' – has the ability to fracture 'capitalist space'. In his words, "only class struggle had the capacity to ... generate differences which are not intrinsic to economic growth" (Lefebvre, 1991: 55). These are essentially 'spatial struggles'. His 'representations of space' are where the power and knowledge of the dominant classes are enshrined in space. These 'dominant' spaces are connected to the 'structures' imposed by the 'relations of production', but they are not determining. Agency can operate in the counter-hegemonic 'spaces of representation' – that comprise a complexity of symbols and codes found in the 'concealed' world of resistance. Only in these lived spaces of resistance can people create their own 'spatiotemporal' order (Harvey, 2000: 236).

These arguments have important consequences for the debates on structure and agency. They imply that individuals are not the repositories of structural relations and that their motivations, ideas and activism cannot be ‘read off’ from a pre-existing societal structure. If agency can make the social world ‘from below’ (Thompson, 1991) then researchers must examine this ‘agency’ and its subjective experiences, conscious always of the collective and individual agency involved in social change.

There is a sense, however, that even Thompson’s argument is lop-sided. This stems from an understandable, though unsatisfactory, tendency to over-compensate for the invisibility of agency in certain political and historical orthodoxies (Thompson, 1991). Thompson (1978) was involved in a prolonged polemic with Althusser, that centred on the latter’s contention that “men ‘have never made history’ at all ...being only ... vectors of ulterior structural determinations...” (1978: 194). Thompson sought to counter Althusser’s determinism that saw individuals as simply vessels containing prevailing societal structures. Althusser gave primacy to ‘labour’ or in his words ‘bodily activity’ which determines historical progress (Althusser, 1994: 218). Althusser attempted to expunge agency from history in his contention that Marx “replaced the old couple individual/human essence in the theory of history by new and suitably impersonal concepts (forces of production, relations of production, etc)” (1969: 229). The desire to counter Althusser’s determinism led Thompson to lose sight of the complex and dynamic reality linking agency and structure, and the individual became the ‘holy’ unit of analysis. As a consequence some commentators have criticised Thompson for abandoning the “laws of motion of capitalist society” that have a determining effect on agency, which is “pushed by objective forces to struggle collectively” (Ashman, 1998: 154).²

These issues have long been identified as problems in social theory (Giddens, 1992), which has seen structure and agency as opposite and competing forces (Sibeon, 1999). In this framework the individual is opposed to structural analysis. However the dichotomy has been contested by Giddens (1993) who argues that ‘systems’ affect agency, but only exist in as much as they are regenerated and supported by people’s

² See Ashman (1998: 150-154) for a general critique of Thompson’s ideas from within the Marxist tradition.

actions (agency). These are important arguments, as there is the implication in Marx's statement that structures – 'encountered or inherited circumstances' – are only ever negative constraints on agency. Others have concurred with Giddens that these structures may also facilitate agency (Betts, 1986). Callinicos (1989) frames these ideas in Marxist terms by explaining that the circumstances enabling agency depend on the relationship to the 'means of production' (the ownership, access and control over the means of creating wealth). The ability of political actors, therefore, to enact social change depends on the collective power of the 'producing classes' derived from an objective understanding of their relationship to the 'means of production'.

This thesis is concerned with the agency of students in the 'democratic transitions' in Zimbabwe and Senegal. It is the contention of the thesis that priority cannot be given to structure or agency, instead the research insists on a careful understanding of the complexities of the dynamic relationship that exists between the two. This calls for an insistence on context (hence the detail paid to the 'inherited histories' of the student movement and the prevailing structures in both case studies), as well as the subjective experiences of the activists. Social change can be seen therefore as a "process expressed and worked through by individual agency more often in collective organisations in specific historical and changing conditions that are subjectively interpreted" (Dwyer, 2003: 38). These concerns can be framed geographically. The spatial arenas of resistances – Lefebvre's counter-hegemonic 'spaces of representation'- are situated in specific 'ground for struggle'. Moore (1997: 88) describes these processes well "“Ground for struggle’ then, becomes an advisedly chosen spatial metaphor for emphasizing the situated practices that shape, but do not necessarily determine, the formations of identities and places.”

A limited focus on one of these elements obscures the real relationship. These arguments are made succinctly by Abrams (1982: 7) who noted that concentrating on either structure or agency blinds us to the actual relations between them, "the structural conditioning of action and the effects of action on structure." Therefore a balance is required that strikes at both agency and structure. In the context of this research it requires an analysis of individual student activists and the conditions that they are forced to negotiate and/or transform. The thesis attempts to combine this approach

throughout, focusing on the macro or structural elements and the ‘student’ voice (one of the principal agents of the transitions).

There is a further and equally vital element to these debates that needs to be emphasised. If human beings act to change the world in response to a set of pre-existing structures, they also develop their own organisational and ideological tools in the process of doing this. Much of the research is concerned with these ‘ideological resources’ developed by the activists themselves and which inform their beliefs, loyalties and activism. In this respect, ideas contain their own force. Weber (1958), writing explicitly against a crude materialism, rejected the notion that ideas can not have a historical significance of their own. On the contrary, he argued, agency reacts on the basis of particular beliefs. Yet ideas do not develop outside the social world that they occupy, indeed they evolve from certain interests and under specific historical contexts. They are formed in the dynamic interchange between structure and agency (Giddens, 1992: 210-212). Equally this does not mean that ideas – like agency – are simply the bearers of material interests, but the content and presence of particular ideas, organisations and ideologies can influence and even determine events (Barker *et al*, 2001).

Desai (1994: 22) makes a similar point that each set of ideas can not always be seen as simply reflective of “social context or forces, although this may be sometimes valid. More often, theories ... are more usefully seen as creative responses to social problems.” The implication here is that while ideas and theories are not simply expressive of material forces, they need to be applicable to them. As Desai explains, “It is through their ability to propose resolutions to social or political problems that these theories become acceptable to social forces” (Desai, 1994: 22). In failing to see this, it is impossible to explain the crucial differences between student activists in the 1970s and the 1990s in Senegal or how a layer of student activists in Zimbabwe in the 1990s was influenced (and managed to effect social change) by socialist ideas. Still, ‘ideas’ by themselves are indeed hollow shells without ‘praxis’: “ideas cannot carry anything out at all. In order to carry out ideas men are needed who dispose of a certain practical force” (Marx, quoted in Giddens, 1992: 211).

The students encountered in this thesis are part of the human agency – that ‘certain practical force’ – that brought about social change, acting in reaction to interests, beliefs and organisational loyalties. The thesis focuses on the ‘lived spaces’ of student activists ‘teeming’ with passion and energy, demonstrating their capacity to make and remake the spatial and social order. The second part of the chapter examines the consequences of these theoretical considerations for the methods employed in the fieldwork; the desire to find the “earnest cadences” of the student voice (Siegelhaum and Walkowitz, 1995: 1). But in addition to using theory to inform the research, the research can also be seen as advancing certain theoretical arguments (see chapters 7 and 8).

2:3 Research methodology: speaking from below

The objective of this thesis is, in the words of Dwyer (2003: 48), to “personalise the workings of social forces to illustrate the personal and social impacts often passed over in generic terms like, ‘protest’ and ‘transformation.’” It is the process of listening to the experiences and voices of those student activists involved in these moments of political upheaval that we can uncover both the ‘hidden history’ of these movements, and the real dynamic of their activism. It is through the interrogation of students’ motivations for being involved in protests, organisations and activism that we can begin to unwrap the student politics in the two case studies.

Social researchers adopting such a framework seek the disclosure of personal motivations and actions that will bring the researcher close to the subject under study (Sayer, 1984). These methods are essential for social scientists seeking to understand the interplay of agency and structure. As Samuel and Thompson (1993: 2) comment: “The individuality of each life story ceases to be an awkward impediment to generalisation, and becomes instead a vital document of construction of consciousness, emphasising both the variety of experience in any social group, and also how individual stories draw on a common culture.” These suppositions necessarily question the notion of the isolated individual. Indeed all human beings are born into and shaped by (and in turn shape) a pre-existing ‘common culture’. This tension, the one that exists between structure and agency, is well expressed by Marx “Though a man is a unique individual ... he is equally the whole, the ideal whole, the subjective existence of society as

thought and experienced” (quoted in Giddens, 1992: 13). Establishing a research methodology must, therefore, be consistent with these considerations.

As a consequence, a variety of research methods are employed, including the use of in-depth or intensive case studies, semi-structured interviews and participant observation. The next section details the specific methods used and difficulties encountered during the fieldwork in Zimbabwe and Senegal. It raises some issues associated with conducting research in Zimbabwe, during the country’s recent political crisis.

2:4 “What are you doing in Zimbabwe?”

What is notable in the literature on the student movements in both Senegal and Zimbabwe is the remarkable lack of student voices. In Zimbabwe this is perhaps more excusable, there has been twenty years less research and as a consequence there is very little written specifically on student activism. This is largely because independence came in 1980, twenty years after Senegal’s, although two case-studies from the pre-independence period stand out (Gelfand, 1978; Cefkin, 1975). In Senegal this is harder to justify. There are a number of important studies that completely neglect the object of their investigation: the motivation and activism of the student. As discussed in chapter 1 this was an important motivation for undertaking this research.

Making the study comparative broadens the scope of the research, avoids simplistic conclusions about sub-Saharan Africa but reveals a dynamic of student activism that many argue is characteristic of the continent (Alidou *et al*, 2000). Senegal and Zimbabwe are separated by thousands of kilometres and distinct political and cultural histories. Senegal’s post-independence political trajectory was tied to distinct national and regional factors and the nature of the colonial state inherited from the French in 1960 (Diop, 1993). Situated in the northern-most tip of West Africa, the country shares an important historical relationship to the Muslim world (Coulon, 1983). Zimbabwe by contrast achieved independence in 1980, after a protracted war against an entrenched settler state. The recent history of Zimbabwe is linked inextricably to the struggles against white minority rule in the region and the nature of the national liberation movement (Bond, 1998). These distinct historical trajectories are reflected in the student movements. Students in Senegal frequently identify themselves with religious groups,

and are likely to describe themselves as committed Muslims before assuming a political identity. The enormous prestige of the fight for national liberation in Zimbabwe lingers on in the student movement.³ It has far fewer adherents today, but the ‘fake anti-imperialism’ of ZANU-PF – that saw Robert Mugabe ‘assume’ the mantle of progressive social change linked to land reforms (Munyaradzi, 2002b) – did manage to secure a certain level of political support on the campus.

Although these are important differences the principal contours of the student movement are remarkably similar. Both countries were buffeted by the effects of structural adjustment, in the 1980s and 1990s (Saul, 2001). The evolution of student politics – from a privileged elite to an increasingly proletarianised social group – was also a common feature to both countries. Similarly, during the late 1990s, each country underwent a political transition that, although distinct, warrants interrogation and comparison. I should also admit to a certain opportunism, that I suspect informs all research. I was teaching in Senegal at Cheikh Anta Diop *Université* during the historic elections in 2000, and witnessed the involvement of students (many of them students that I taught) first hand. This period marked the start of my research. For entirely different reasons I was in Zimbabwe in 2002. I was there helping to coordinate the Independent Media Centre during the presidential elections. Most of my contacts at the time were students from the University of Zimbabwe in Harare and the National University of Science and Technology in Bulawayo. The opportunity to enrich the research by making it comparative seemed obvious from my position in Senegal in 2000.

Social science research in Senegal is a relatively easy process. There is a rich and developed tradition of research that stretches back to independence, from Cheikh Anta Diop’s pioneering research at the Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire (IFAN) at the University of Dakar in the 1960s and 1970s, to the establishment of Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA). Dakar now boasts a large number of research institutes and centres. The majority of archival research was conducted at the school of journalism at the university Centre d’Etudes des Sciences et Techniques de l’Information (CESTI). The library has a full newspaper archive. I

³ In fact I would argue that the ‘prestige’ of the fight for independence has affected even the judgement of the most clear-sighted Zimbabwean commentators.

conducted 30 interviews in 2001 with a combination of student activists – members of faculty amicales (departmental unions) – and ‘ordinary’ students, whose activity would rise and fall with the pace of mobilisation. Despite intense political competition, student activists frequently introduced me to their political foes. In the second period of research, in 2004, 28 further interviews were conducted. Although the interviews followed a semi-structured approach, the depth and length of interviews varied widely. The majority of the second set of interviews in 2004 were with leading current and ex-student activists, and these were frequently conducted in the evening and interrupted by prayers, or by comrades who would join the discussions and often transform them into group interviews. This is an important observation, and one that transforms part of the fieldwork. It is also a process that is not discussed in any of the relevant literature and hence requires further investigation. Further interviews were much shorter and conducted using a note-book with students at both Cheikh Anta Diop and at Gaston Berger Université in Saint Louis. In contrast to Zimbabwe, the only questioning from the police or security services were enquires about the nature of my research, which frequently prompted advice and opinions.

The majority of interviews were conducted in French, although a number were carried out in English, once it had been established that the interviewee spoke better English than my French. Linguistic misunderstandings were a constant problem that required patience on the part of the interviewee and a great amount of preparation on the part of the interviewer. Although I transcribed most of the interviews that were conducted in French, I occasionally required the assistance of a fluent French speaker.

There is, of course, a more profound linguistic issue for the researcher in Africa, the exclusion of the researcher from African languages. The frustration at this exclusion led me to write in my research journal in Zimbabwe, “I am getting less than half of Zimbabwe. Lack of Shona – the condition for most foreigners here – is an extraordinary omission. That these ‘great’ Africanists do not speak local and national languages, makes their observations facile and often absolutely absurd ... more proof of the wall that divides the continents” (11-12 May 2003). It was impossible for me to conduct certain interviews with members of the National Youth Service in Chegutu. I was forced to use a research assistant and native Shona speaker. However, this was essential as much for political reasons as linguistic ones.

Zimbabwe's recent political and economic crisis has been much noted in the international press. One commentator has observed how the regime has reanimated a dormant nationalism that has been redefined in increasingly racial terms: "race as a key trope within the discourse, and a selective rendition of the liberation history deployed as an ideological policing agent in the public debate" (Raftopoulos, 2004). A report on the state media in 2002 – during the first period of research – concluded that Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation's (ZBC) conceptualisation of 'nation' was simplistic:

It was based on race: The White and Black race. Based on those terms, the world was reduced to two nations – the white nation and the black nation and these stood as mortal rivals. The Black nation was called Africa. Whites were presented as Europeans who could only belong to Europe just as Africa was for Africans and Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans (quoted in Raftopoulos 2004).

It was against this background of the politicisation of 'race' and 'Europeans' that the research was undertaken. In these conditions it required a substantial façade, denying the real nature of the visit on both fieldtrips and a willingness to undertake considerable risks. There are perhaps two issues here that need to be enunciated more clearly. The first is obvious: I was white in a context in which race is politicised, so clearly no 'façade' was possible here.⁴ The second was that my research itself was contentious: I was conducting research in the highly charged political environment of the university, and among a group of political actors who had been the most vociferous in their condemnation of the regime. I had also arrived during a period when the self-confidence of the opposition had been undermined by state violence and the internal decay of the opposition itself (see chapter 5). Although the university campus afforded me a certain freedom, I was told repeatedly that students from the ruling party – Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) – who were paid by the state were 'aware'

⁴ During a particularly difficult period of the research in Zimbabwe, frustrated that I had not been able to access a number of contacts, I reflected very negatively on the issue of being white in sub-Saharan Africa. It is worth quoting at length: "I have decided that there is no way to be in Africa. A white man is always a monstrosity. If he is kind and benevolent he is a patronising missionary patting Africans on the head. If he is hard and mean he is another stereotype: the crude racist and coloniser. Even the aloof or curious researcher is a cliché: the superior white men coming to inspect and analyse the natives ... There is no interaction between white and black people on the continent that can exist outside these parameters ... All behaviour leads to the same conclusion: get out. There is no place for you here" (15 May, 2003). I do not intend to pursue these discussions here, suffice to say that I suspect I was exaggerating in difficult circumstances. Frantz Fanon (1952) discussed some of these issues in his classic study *Black Skin, White Masks*.

of my presence at the university. What this meant was often unclear, but I was advised to leave the campus for several days. I conducted interviews on a very haphazard basis, when student activists were able to find a space to see me. It was also imperative that the majority of interviews at the University of Zimbabwe were conducted before the start of June. The date had been fixed for the 'final push', which involved mass mobilisations across the country, called and organised by the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The potential for continuing the research beyond this date was uncertain. The entire period of research was in one respect 'illegal', I was forced to enter the country on false pretences. I lied repeatedly to the authorities, neighbours and even friendly contacts about what I was doing in the country. This raises the question of the ethics of research that have been discussed in the context of global activism (see Routledge, 2003).

I conducted 40 interviews in Zimbabwe with a range of activists and non-political students. Four key interviews were also undertaken in South Africa, with recent student leaders from Zimbabwe who were studying in 'exile' in Johannesburg and Durban, and with the doyen of ex-student militants from the 1980s, now working as a banker in Johannesburg. The later part of the fieldwork involved extensive use of a newspaper archive, more or less hidden in the basement of the Law Library. This provided access to vital material that was difficult to access in the national archives without exposing myself to further questioning. For much of the historical background I made extensive use of *The Herald*, which was, until 1999, the only daily newspaper. *The Herald* has traditionally been the mouthpiece of the government and its validity as an historical source was approached critically throughout the research.

The most obvious point is that the research in Zimbabwe was not conducted in ideal circumstances. Indeed, it was punctuated by arrest, surveillance and the pressure of living in a country in the midst of an economic and political crisis. Access to a number of people was impossible and certain national archives were unreachable: undoubtedly the research would have benefited from being able to draw on these sources. However, in certain respects, examining the activism of students in conditions that they have had to confront in the country's polytechnics and universities gave me a rare insight into the nature of their political action. My dependence on the oral testimony of current and past student activists was indispensable in both reconstructing the history of the student

movement and in examining the experiences and meaning of their activism in the circumstances of the crisis in Zimbabwe. In this respect my methods were not entirely determined by my theoretical approach – the attempt to interrogate the agents of social change in Zimbabwe – but also due to the conditions I directly confronted in the field. I strongly believe that all research must be partly conditioned by these realities rather than solely determined by theoretical presuppositions. But there is a need to be reflexive about the impacts on the research.

2:5 Case studies and student movements

Sayer (1984) has stressed how case studies can focus on complicated relationships; they should make use of intensive research, for example combining interviews, archives and secondary data. He argues that case studies are a useful technique for revealing previously undisclosed social processes. They can elucidate the complexities (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1993) within the institutions, groups and individuals. The use of case studies for comparative purposes – in Senegal and Zimbabwe – presents the researcher with potentially rich results, facilitating a deeper understanding of the relationships (and singularity) between the areas under study (Bryman, 1988).

It is inherently problematic to make references – as this study repeatedly does – to ‘Africa’ and ‘sub-Saharan Africa’. The obvious danger with referring to the whole continent is that the analysis becomes too simplistic to be either convincing or useful. Is the focus on sub-Saharan Africa a conflation of geography and ontology? It is clear that the division of Africa by the Sahara cannot be assumed, African scholars have long referred to the problematic (and frequently) colonial distinction between Africa north and south of the Sahara (Alexander and Renton, 2002). There are, however, legitimate arguments for considering the shared experiences of a large and diverse region. These tensions can be seen in the literature; many arguing that protest movements and political transitions arose for similar reasons and produced broadly similar movements (Seddon and Walton, 1994; Alidou *et al*, 2000; Zeilig, 2002a). However, I am acutely aware of the dangers of Africa-wide generalisation. Yet I would argue that a broad picture of its political and economic transformation is both possible and necessary. After all, almost all African countries are subject to similar pressures of neoliberalism and globalisation – much as they were once subject to European colonialism. Still, I agree with Williams

(2004: 576-7) when he argues that there is no substitute for the careful inter-disciplinary study of specific African realities. Williams explores some of these issues for comparative study. Comparisons, he argues, must not be grounded in overarching 'homologies' "which specify identical processes at work through different instances". He advocates different and more 'fractured' comparisons "which are always partial and raise interesting questions precisely where they break down". This is not a rejection of comparative study but an appeal for closer attention to the 'particular' and the "logic of the processes which shape them." Sayer (1984: 240-1) also warns against the dangers of generalising from case studies.

The specific agency of student activists can only be accounted for by allowing complexity and contingency. The specific 'encountered circumstances', as we have seen, produce, shape and are shaped by agency operating within a particular 'spatiotemporal order' (Harvey, 2000: 236)⁵. But complementary efforts at comparison, synthesis and generalization are always necessary and possible (see also Seddon and Zeilig, 2005).

Some of the problematic issues connected to using case studies have been considered by a range of researchers and it is useful to survey some of their ideas. Becker (1970) described one aim of case studies as to arrive at a detailed understanding of the group that is being studied, in order, he argues, to develop general theoretical statements about the functioning of social structure and process. In an argument that lends weight to 'grounded theory' he argues that case studies can be a useful tool in generating new hypotheses that can be tested against further data and research. However, it has been noted that it is never possible to generalise on the basis of these findings and it remains deeply problematic whether findings from one case study can be applied to others. Bryman (1988) has argued that one of the principal ways of overcoming the problem of generalisation is to carry out a number of comparative case studies looking at the same social phenomenon. However, as he has also noted, it may be difficult to make direct comparisons with work carried out by different researchers, or even by the same researcher at different times or in different places. He argues, however, that the research

⁵ This is a term that means more than just 'space and time', see Harvey (1996) and Chapter 3 for a fuller description of this term.

is likely to be more systematic if it has been carried out by one researcher – or group of researchers – which will give it a coherence that it might otherwise lack.

These arguments raise further questions about the structuring of fieldwork and research methods, including, for example, about whether interviews should be conducted before or after archival research or after a period of participant observation. In both of these case studies there were no recent histories of the student movements; as a consequence, I was obliged to reconstruct the narrative of events from disparate sources.⁶ Though fewer interviews were conducted towards the end of the fieldwork, these were often far richer and more detailed: it was possible to engage positively with the interviewee, prodding beyond superficial events. This was possible because I had managed to construct the course of events through careful work in national and university archives. However, practical questions have a tendency to dominate fieldwork, so although it might have been sensible to structure the fieldwork differently I was forced to follow contacts, interviewees and, in Zimbabwe, the precious and difficult access to official documents.

The research was assisted in Zimbabwe by a preliminary research trip in 2002 and in Senegal by a prolonged stay as a lecturer at the university in 2000-1. This gave the research a continuity and coherence that it might otherwise have lacked. In Senegal, where the research was initiated, I benefited from being a direct witness to the role of students during the transition and in the important student strike the following year.

2:6 Oral testimony, interviews and memory

Oral history has become a method used increasingly in the social sciences as a way of understanding, documenting and, in Thompson's (1991: 12) terms, rescuing people from the "enormous condescension of posterity." Indeed, oral testimony is frequently the sole research material that is obtainable (Siegelbaum and Walkowitz, 1995). Oral testimony has often been associated with 'history from below' (James, 1980; Trotsky, 1992). The development of the movement for 'history from below', although initiated by the Communist Party Historians Group in the UK, rose in importance in the 1960s,

⁶ Although there are some useful studies on the Senegalese student movement (Bianchini, 2002; 2004) there is nothing in either country on the recent period of the democratic transition.

together with mass protests and the renaissance in historical enquiry inspired by Marxism. The foundation of the *History Workshop Journal* in the 1960s reflected the renewed interest in rescuing those forgotten or concealed by official histories (Callinicos, 1998: 26).

Oral testimony can allow the researcher to penetrate beyond 'measurable' or quantitative phenomena. As Samuel and Thompson (1993: 2) have written: "In the history of popular movements, crowds are typically studied for their social compositions rather than their ecstatic moments or underlying fears." The idea that it was now possible (and indeed legitimate) to examine the relationships, identities, attitudes and feelings of those frequently unrecorded in the 'crowd' was a breakthrough. In this research I have sought to examine why student activists became involved in politics, what motivates their activism and how they reflect on and remember the experiences of the 'democratic transition'.

The use of these techniques clarifies the actions and reasoning of those present during these moments of 'democratic change'. These techniques, in turn, help us to understand the structures that they are confronting and seeking to transform. Keegan (1988: 159) makes the point when he writes: "each individual's life embodies something of the common experience of a larger social group; each individual life reveals aspects of the experience of a class, of a racial or ethnic group." Accordingly these methods allow us to interrogate both the individual agency and the social world that this agency is intrinsically a part of. For Keegan, 'private experiences' can elucidate social processes. The use of oral testimony allows us to see how the "individual and the social interpenetrate each other" (Levins and Lewontion, 1985: 264). Giddens (1991: 13) describes this interaction as being at the centre of a Marxist epistemology: "Each individual is thus the recipient of the accumulated culture of the generations which have preceded him and, in his own interaction with the natural and social world in which he lives, is a contributor to the further modification of that world as experienced by others." The individual experience can be placed at the centre of social science research. The use of interviews consequently animates and explores the abstract social relations that exist in society, and the agency of social change so often concealed by the orthodoxies of official history (Thompson, 1991).

However, interviews are used so extensively in social science research and in popular culture that two academics have commented that we live in an 'interview society' (Silverman and Atkinson, 1997) where interviews are utilised in employment, education and entertainment. For this study it is important to characterise the nature of intensive research interviews employed in the case studies. The in-depth or intense semi-structured interview used in the thesis varies greatly, from the long narrative interviews used in oral history to the more structured long interview (Turkel, 1975). The use of these techniques derives from the simple fact that the best way to find out about people's activity is to ask them, techniques that have been used to great effect in a number of sociological studies (e.g. Becker, 1963; Bott, 1971; Taylor, 1984). The semi-structured interview enables the researcher to clarify and search beyond the initial answers. They are widely regarded as a technique enabling the subject to detail their own narrative while ensuring fuller discussion than permitted in a questionnaire.

The semi-structured interview allows flexibility, ensuring both interviewee and researcher a certain 'autonomy' to discuss subjects deemed relevant and appropriate. They enable a combination of methods, both detailed and open-ended questions and factual, direct ones. Cohen and Manion (2000) argue that this 'flexibility' ensures that the researcher can investigate in-depth questions while clarifying misunderstandings. The semi-structured interview can also result in responses in the process of unfurling complex issues that lead to new research hypotheses and the continual development of questions for the project.

Nevertheless there are several pitfalls involved in using these methods. There is, perhaps, more danger of influencing the outcome of the interview. While undoubtedly the flexibility inherent in semi-structured interviews permits a greater probing of the subject, it also allows the interview to be manipulated. Preparation before the interview has been identified as a method of avoiding these problems (Gavron, 1966; Becker, 1970). There are also the problems of 'historical' questions, when the interviewee has questionable recollections of past events. Robson (1993) suggests, therefore, emphasising questions centring on the present or recent past. Although these criticisms have validity, when a combination of supplementary data and research is used, these problems can be reduced. This process has been described as 'triangulation', where data from a variety of different sources is used (Yin, 2003).

Interviewing activists who were directly involved in events, and have a specific and personal recollection of them, poses further problems. Activists would frequently employ a conscious or unconscious ‘historical amnesia’ when it came to uncomfortable issues about their involvement in events. This would necessitate gentle probing of events to determine their role in them. Samuel and Thompson (1993: 7) make this point very forcibly: “Memory is inherently revisionist, an exercise in selective amnesia ... what is forgotten may be as important as what is remembered.” Omissions were often as important as the inclusions; this was a particular issue in Senegal when activists (and ex-activists) threw accusations at each other. I was frequently compelled to ‘remind’ interviewees of incidents that they had, apparently, been involved in, but did not remember. These were more than subsidiary concerns when the accusations centred around the ‘political opportunism’ of Aliou Sow, Minister of Youth and former activist at the University. Sow was also one of my gatekeepers, helping me access other important former activists from the university. I had to tread carefully.

There were further complications related to these questions for the research. Student activists in both countries were still intimately involved in national political structures, and to achieve a degree of trust and openness that went beyond a crude narrative of their activism was frequently very difficult. It required persistence: to secure an interview in the first place, and then repeated interviews over a period of time. I was also required to prove my ‘credentials’ to certain activists as a *bona fide* researcher (and occasionally ‘committed activist’), who was not partisan. However the continual problem was that the depth of the interviews could only be secured by assurances that I was interested in their activism as a researcher and historian, and, in Zimbabwe, not as a journalist.⁷

If we acknowledge that semi-structured interviews give us ‘depth’, it is also important to understand the way the interview is conducted. As Plummer (1983: 97) observed, a semi-structured “interview is very largely a matter of designing ideas about the right probe at the right time.” Equally the interviewer must attempt to minimise the ‘meddling’ impact of the researcher, who may only succeed in ‘capturing’ their own

⁷ The term ‘historian’ is not used by accident. Its use meant that I was able to escape certain superficial interviews – particularly those with politicians – because they were eager to record their experiences for the ‘sake of the historical record’. The research is also an historical contribution to the recent period of political change on Zimbabwe and Senegal.

prejudices, logic and categories (McCracken, 1988). It requires two essential and related elements: firstly the attempt by the researcher to limit ‘interference’ – probing the interviewee but not ‘interrogating’; secondly recognising the impact of that ‘interference’ in the research and the nature of the interviewee/researcher relationship. It is clear that the interviewer cannot avoid ‘interference’, but we can be reflexive about the impact we have.

These issues also call for a certain flexibility. Although it is vital not to ‘interrogate’ the interviewee, sometimes a more persistent response was essential. Interviewing an older generation of activists in South Africa required a mixture of interview techniques. One interviewee was extremely confrontational, insisting that I engaged in a debate (that took about an hour) with him about the ‘class nature’ of the MDC. The political space that South Africa gave me meant that there was greater freedom in the interviews. These were Zimbabwean activists, now based in South Africa, though still deeply involved in the Zimbabwean crisis, remembering a past, rather than reliving an all too difficult present.

There were also more specific issues connected to interviewing students in both countries. Students, often involved in research projects themselves, understood the complexities and difficulties of conducting interviews. In Senegal I was never forced to labour over the ‘reasons’ for the research, which among certain activists were immediately evident. Many students also had a surplus of time that meant they were willing to be interviewed again, or introduce other informants. The interviews frequently took place in difficult circumstances, and we were often forced to quickly reschedule the interviews, or hold them again. This benefited the interviews in that I was able to reflect on the content of the discussion before seeing the interviewee again. There was also – because of the experiences that we were covering – an inevitable intimacy. I started the interviews by asking about the person’s background, and as the interviews proceeded we would frequently cover vital experiences in their lives, without clear distinction between personal and political worlds.⁸

⁸ One experience stands out. After the failed ‘final push’ in Zimbabwe – when students were viciously beaten and seriously injured after a demonstration at UZ – I managed to interview several female students who had been targeted by the police after the campus was ransacked by the security services. Philippa (not her real name) related how she was forced to lie on the ground – fearing all the time that she would be raped, or beaten to death – and hit across the back and buttocks by a group of policemen who hurled

There is an element of the research that haunts me; that I was essentially parasitical on the hardship, pain and experiences of my interviewees. My sole objective, after all, was to unearth the experiences and history of the student movement, in doing this I would often tread clumsily on the lives of those I met and interviewed. The circumstances I found myself in and the intimacy of the interviews frequently left me feeling exhausted and useless. I could not be a friend to those interviewed, and yet I found the objectivity of the research sometimes impossible to sustain. I was constantly 'running off', stepping in and out of people's lives without always realising the consequences of doing this. Terkel (1975: xxii-xxiii) has written beautifully about this dilemma (and pain) during interviews conducted for his famous collection *Working*:

It was a Brooklyn fireman who astonished me to shame. After what I had felt was an overwhelming experience – meeting him – he invited me to stay 'for supper. We'll pick something up at the Italian joint on the corner'. I had unplugged my tape recorder ... 'Oh Jesus' I remember the manner in which I mumbled. 'I am supposed to see this hotel clerk on the other side of town.' He said, 'You runnin' off like that? Here we been talkin' all afternoon. It won't sound nice. This guy, Studs, comes to me house, gets my life on tape, and says, 'I gotta go'...' ... Not that it was a revelatory experience for me. Though I had up to that moment succeeded in burying it, this thief-in-the-night feeling, I knew it was there. The fireman stunned me into facing up to it.

2:7 Who to interview?

There is a great deal of pragmatism connected to accessing interviewees. There are, however, vital conscious decisions made about who and who not to interview. These decisions are inevitably tied to the theoretical framework underpinning the research. If the aim of the research is informed by Thompson's commitment to rescue those 'agents' of historical change forgotten by the 'enormous condescension of posterity', it is important that those recorded are not just the successful (those remembered in the historical accounts) but also those whose voices rarely heard, much less remembered. I could have dwelled on the great successes of the student movement; those who had reached the heights of political office from the lowly ranks of student unionism. There

insults at her. She had not participated in the demonstration and had simply returned to the campus at the 'wrong time'. As she told me her story she expressed the shame that meant that she could not tell her parents, and she started to cry. I fought back my tears and turned off the tape recorder and tried, vainly, to reassure her. I could not remain the objective and independent researcher.

were many of these in both case studies. I needed their experiences as well (more on this below) but I made a conscious decision early on in the research to concentrate on grass-root activists, and other students, who fell in and out of activity with the ebbs and flows of the movement.

This reasoning is tied directly to an attempt not to provide another vehicle for the “modulated words of politicians and intellectuals” (Siegelbaum and Walkowitz, 1995: 1), but to include those who do not have their answers on ‘stand-by’ or have not already constructed their narrative before you walk into the room. Terkel (1975: xxv-xxvi) found himself removing many of those whom he had interviewed for his study, “there are deliberate omissions ... doctors ... politicians, journalists and writers of any kind... I felt that their articulateness and expertise offered them other forums ... I was interested in other countries not often heard from.” These were problematic objectives among students, particularly those active politically. These activists were used to expressing themselves and reflecting on political choices, still they were not familiar with the probing of an interviewer and in general I did not feel that their answers were always ready made. I specifically targeted those who had not always been in the front row of student activism, and although not everyone is directly quoted in the research, their opinions and beliefs have been essential to my understanding of the activism of their movements.

The approach adopted could not exclude interviewing politicians, who had been student activists. This was indeed a vital element in the recent history of the student movements in both countries, the elevation of a layer of university student activists to national parliaments during the ‘democratic transitions.’ Still their accounts could not be taken at face value; often I gleaned less from their ‘modulated words’ than I did from activists who remained at the university. Lummis (1987) observes that elites are highly conscious of the dangers of speaking publicly, and, as a result, during interviews their opinions should be considered very critically. But this is not the whole picture. Some of these issues arose during an interview with an MP in Zimbabwe. Job Sakhala, now an MP for a poor township in Harare, is one of the most colourful ex-leaders of the student movement. After a titanic struggle to arrange an interview with him (which finally took place in his car and then in three Harare bars and finally at his constituency home), he used the opportunity to ‘set the record straight’, and gave me an incredibly detailed

account of the student movement and the evolution of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change that had, in his words, degenerated into a “scramble and fight for economic riches” (interview 30 July 2003). Inevitably he saw the interview as a way of responding to his critics in the party but also as an opportunity to record the extraordinary events in which he had been an actor (see chapter 5).

In seeking to find the student activists I was indebted to certain ‘gatekeepers’. These are organisations or individuals who have, as a result of their experience in the field, access to informants, and who can frequently use their authority to secure access for a third party (Erlandson, 1993). In both countries there were two principal gatekeepers. In Zimbabwe one was an organisation, the International Socialist Organisation (ISO), which I had worked with in 2002 as I was helping to coordinate the Independent Media Centre. Many of its members were students; some of them had been key activists in the recent ‘transitions’. This was a unique opportunity to have access both to the ‘historical’ actors, and those current ones who maintained a very keen sense of the background and evolution of the movement that they now led. Arriving at interviews with ISO accreditation made me immediately credible. Through ISO, and particularly Munyaradzi Gwisai,⁹ I was also introduced to a number of non-aligned intellectuals at the University of Zimbabwe and in South Africa, who had been involved in the movement since the early 1980s. I snowballed from these contacts to many activists that were unknown, or barely known, by ISO members.

In Senegal I was assisted by having been a part-time lecturer at the *Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines* before the main period of my fieldwork. My initial gatekeeper was a former student Jean-Claude Kongo, who had played a small role in the events described in the thesis. He put me in touch with Hamidou Ba, who was also interviewed for the role that he had played in 2000. Ba became my chief informant and contact. In many ways he was typical of a generation of activists. He knew how to negotiate life at the university, but less successful with his studies. He was never without accommodation on the university (a scarce resource), having well-established connections with the university administration, the *Centre des Œuvres Universitaires de Dakar* (COUD). His activism gave him a formidable contact list, and for those he did

⁹ Gwisai is a lecturer in the Law Department at UZ and a leading member of the ISO.

not know he had the self-confidence to convince them that he did. Ba revealed as much about the student movement from his behaviour, as he did through the contacts that he was so generous with. My abiding memory is of him raging in the diner hall at the quality of the food being served, hitting his fist against the table so that our trays would jump into the air, exclaiming: 'This food is not fit for intellectuals!' He was symbolic in many ways of the 'perpetual student' of my study that is no longer in transition to a prefixed social world but paralysed within the university circuit. From Ba I was able to make contacts of my own, which eventually led me to *Université Gaston Berger* in Saint Louis. I have a great – and perhaps unpayable – debt to both of these contacts.¹⁰

I was also helped by having published on the student movement in Senegal (Zeilig, 2002c; 2004b) and this gave me access to certain intellectuals both in France and Senegal. Pascal Bianchini from *Université de Bordeaux* was particularly useful. He put me in contact with a number of scholars at CODESRIA. Yann Lebeau gave me a number of important contacts in the English department at *Université Gaston Berger*, who in turn put me in contact with certain current student activists. In the reconstruction of the recent period of student activism in Senegal since the *changement politique*, I benefited from the stimulating collaboration of Vincent Foucher from the *Centre d'Etudes d'Afrique Noire*, Bordeaux.

In a thesis that seeks to uncover the hidden voices of activists one of the important issues for the researcher is the virtual invisibility of female activists. An analysis of the excluded must include women. A concerted effort was made to interview female activists and several prominent activists are quoted in the study. However female activism is largely absent, not because of the prejudices of the researcher but the profound obstacles to their political activism in Senegal and Zimbabwe. Both of the main national campuses in the case studies were male dominated spaces. Male students are not only dominant, but they use their masculinity/machismo to exclude and

¹⁰ Hamidou Ba turned up in London in January 2005, after I had written him a letter of invitation the previous summer. He had spent almost 4 months travelling around West Africa trying to raise the funds for the visit. He ended up only staying for a fortnight, after days paralysed by an impossible dilemma. Should he outstay his visa and try to find illegal work in the UK? Or should he return before the visa expires? He told me that no one in Senegal expected him to return; the assumption being that if you managed to get out you do not come back. However, he left as scheduled, reasoning that he would be proving to the European and American embassies in Dakar that he could be trusted with another visa, and another chance to escape. Such are the humiliating visa games that preoccupy a generation in much of the developing world.

occasionally terrorise women. These campus realities reflect highly patriarchal societies. Students are also differentiated by ethnicity. Ethnicity is an important element to campus politics. In Zimbabwe most of the leading student activists are Shona, the dominant ethnic and linguistic group in the country. The discussion of ethnicity was an important element in the interviews with activists in both case studies.

I am acutely aware of the dangers in revealing the identities of student activists. These were questions that preoccupied me in both Senegal and Zimbabwe. In Senegal a layer of student activists have been co-opted into political parties or have received bursaries for foreign studies and in a number of limited cases students have been elected into parliamentary office. In this environment accusation and counter-accusation are hurled backwards and forewords by activists, making the interviews hazardous processes, and potentially dangerous for the interviewees themselves. Students would use my research to implicate other activists in contentious events, and also, occasionally, to throw dirt at each other. This was graphically illustrated in the violent attack and hospitalisation of Madiop Biteye – the leading PDS student militant in Dakar - after a dispute among PDS partisans at the university in Dakar. The current violence of campus politics illustrates the disintegration of the student movement since the election of Wade in 2000 (Walfadri, 2005). In Zimbabwe the principal source of violence against activists has come from the state, and students have been regularly targeted, arrested and tortured. During both periods of fieldwork I asked interviewees if they agreed to have their identity revealed in the thesis. After the thesis was written I recontacted students who are quoted in the study to establish again that they were happy for me to use their full names. In many cases students would pre-empt the question by raising it themselves, insisting that their accounts were recorded and voices heard. Several students even contacted me after the fieldwork to ensure that their interviews were being used in the study. Female students in Zimbabwe were, however, far more hesitant and I was asked on a number of occasions to ensure their anonymity. This concern stems from the particular vulnerability of female students to violence, some of it sexual, by other students and the security forces. As a consequence the thesis is inconsistent in the use of the students' real names, and I have indicated where students have requested the use of a pseudonym.

2:8 ‘A wolf in sheep’s clothing’: empathy and activism?

Did the voices I record echo with my own experiences? This is no superficial question. In fact for many pragmatic and personal reasons I often identified directly with the lives of the interviewees. I was also frequently asked this question myself. The question came in various shapes and forms: ‘What are you doing in Zimbabwe?’ to which I would reply that I was conducting research for my PhD. This ‘technical’ response frequently sufficed; after all I was working in an intellectual milieu where academic research was considered normal. However, often these responses were not enough, and questions kept coming: “But why in Zimbabwe? Why have you chosen students?” and sometimes, “What do you know about activism?” In these circumstances and particularly in the politically tense environment of Zimbabwe, I needed to demonstrate an empathy with the lives and experiences of the activists I was interviewing and observing. Frequently it was not sufficient to be the disinterested academic observer that has certain racialised connotations in Africa. To access certain contacts it was indispensable that I was seen also as an activist, who had worked and organised politically in the United Kingdom.

Therefore my political activism was not always disguised. It helped to be familiar with organising demonstrations, discussing questions of political change and having a familiarity with the experiences and aspirations of activists involved in social movements. The feminist Sara Evans (1979: x) was very conscious of this:

From the outset I was aware that my own background – southern, white, activist, feminist – would profoundly influence this work. The influence could, I knew full well, amount to distortion, the substitution for my own experience for that of others ... and the failure to ask questions that could lead to information and interpretations which would challenge my assumptions. At the same time, my own participation and experience, used rigorously and self-consciously might provide the kinds of intuition and empathetic leaps that inform all historians as they come to know their material intimately.

It was vital to separate and distance myself from the interviewees, and to be in no way partisan to the internal (and sometimes) violent disputes that divided them. I could be regarded as an ‘activist-scholar’ without being ascribed a particular side in the debates and arguments inside the student movement. Still, my ability to negotiate the vocabulary of political activism and for the stories and lives of the interviewees to

resonate with my experiences did give me insights that no 'outsider' would have had access to. I managed to detach myself (with some effort) from particular debates but found it indispensable to have an empathy with the ideas and politics of the interviewees despite the fact that we were separated by background and geography. Nevertheless activism, to a certain extent, created a safe space (Burnett, 2003).

My assumptions were always being challenged, but they needed to be flexible enough to permit these challenges. One set of assumptions centred on the activism of ZANU-PF supporting students. I was fairly certain that access to these students would prove impossible, in the midst of a turf war for political influence with the MDC at the University of Zimbabwe, and that even if contact with them was made it would be prove fruitless; they would, I believed, simply repeat the shibboleths of the ruling party. I was wrong on every count. Their leading member, David Matsikidze, was a critical and thoughtful activist who rejected many ZANU-PF policies. A member of the ISO, Steve Biko, who engaged in lively and fraternal debate with him, introduced me. When students were violently beaten on the first day of the national action, the 'final push', he disassociated himself from the action of the government. I was only able to access ZANU students on the campus by being regarded as a sympathetic though independent activist and student.

These ideas are not alien to social science research. Participatory action research (PAR) acknowledges the involvement and experiences of the researcher and seeks to promote 'change'. Yoland Wadsworth (1998) explains that PAR,

typically involves ... those who share your concerns, experiences and interests; others suffering from the problematic situation; others trying to assist it to change ... As well, action research is not research which sees these as 'contaminating' processes which 'bias' the scientific effort, nor does it have a problem with the 'researcher/s' identifying with 'the researched' and the 'researched for', – seeing this rather as essential to the gaining of engaged understanding ... What 'drives' participatory action research, like any research, is our 'need to know' in order to bring about desired change.

A number of writers have written about these methods (Reason, 1988). Although PAR is not explicitly taken up in this research I am sympathetic with many of its arguments. Burnett (2003) also refuses to divide her activism from her professional role as an

academic. Indeed she sees a fusion of the two, and a commitment to social action that involves challenging the status quo. As she writes: “we should not be ashamed of having a perspective since all research is done from some perspective. The methodological problem arises when the researcher is unaware of or does not acknowledge her perspective” (Burnett, 2003: 143).

2:9 Participant and non-participant observation

Although much of my research was non-participant observation - the student action I directly participated in was limited - a discussion of the issues associated with participant observation is important to this research. Participant observation is used by a wide-range of social researchers with diverse theoretical backgrounds, it is a methodology associated strongly with the work of symbolic interactionists (e.g. Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1968). Polsky (1967) identifies two forms of participant observation, overt and covert, arguing that it is ethically and morally vital to be open with the social group under investigation. This avoids the danger of participating in immoral, illegal or dangerous behaviour. What is more, it gives the researcher the freedom to ask questions without fear of being intimidated or ‘exposed’. However, overt participation as a social researcher will affect the behaviour of those being studied and knowledge that they are being observed will fundamentally shape the interaction of the group. Again this posed serious problems in Zimbabwe. As a white researcher I was forced to stand outside events, even when I knew the participants. Yet is it vital to understand that the method requires a certain degree of invisibility, the researcher by definition must be able to blend into the activity he seeks to explain. This ‘invisibility’ is impossible for a white researcher in Africa.

Generally participant observation can play an important supplementary role to semi-structured interviews. It is more probable that it will reveal valid data than simply ‘single encounters’ of interviews (Yablonsky, 1997). It is a useful technique for revealing previously undisclosed social processes preventing the ‘prejudices’ of the researcher from intruding. As Whyte (1981: 303) argued in a seminal study, “As I sat and listened, I learned the answers to questions that I would not even have had the sense to ask if I had been getting my information solely on an interviewing basis.” I was a

participant observer of the student strike in Dakar in January 2001. Although I had by this stage a clearer sense of the trajectory of the student movement, the ‘participant observation’ of the strike gave an essential depth to what had been largely an ‘academic’ understanding of student activism.¹¹ Liebow (1967) analysed these themes in a famous sociological study, stating that the desire not to distort the research led him to use participant observations that avoided, he argued, imposing a structure on the material that was foreign to the fieldwork itself.

Critics of participant observation insist that it provides neither the objectivity (‘groundedness’) nor distance necessary for serious research. Indeed it is stated that it is an approach that rests heavily on the interpretation of fallible and prejudiced observers – the observer is solely responsible for what they observe and what is omitted (or what they do not ‘notice’). However, as a complementary method in conjunction with semi-structured interviews it may allow the researcher to pursue unexpected directions. There are further more practical considerations to take into account. Participant observations are, by their nature, time consuming and require the physical presence of the researcher (Cicourel, 1976). They necessitate the researcher participating in activities that they may dislike or that put them in danger. Every aspect of research in Zimbabwe carried a degree of danger, and enough risks to deter more experienced researchers.¹²

2:10 Conclusion

This study focuses on sub-Saharan Africa – and specifically Zimbabwe and Senegal – and examines in detail the theoretical and empirical support for the development and evolution of student activism across the continent, tied to the waves of popular protest and political and economic change on the continent. The study seeks to identify the structural dynamics constantly limiting and producing social and cultural forms, while at the same time recognising that political struggles generate social and political

¹¹ My participation in a number of the demonstrations during the strike was probably not the wisest research decision I have made. I was repeatedly asked if I was a journalist and when I replied in the negative I was asked why I was there. On one occasion I was hit by a stone thrown by a policeman, who I do not think had been aiming at me.

¹² Patrick Bond who has written extensively about Zimbabwe, decided not to travel to Harare during the presidential elections in 2002 while Miles Larmer changed the topic of a comparative research project because of the impossibilities of working freely in Zimbabwe (personal communications). This is not to demonstrate my courage, only my inexperience and fool-hardiness.

transition and change. This chapter has located the theoretical concerns of the thesis within the debates over agency and structure. From these theoretical priorities emerged the choice of methodology, and although I draw on wide range of methodological sources, these are consistent with my theoretical perspective.

But crucially, I would argue, the evolution of student activism in my case studies and how this activism increasingly converged with wider protests movements in the 1980s and 1990s, cannot be identified and understood, except in the dynamic ‘course of events’ – that is, in their historical context. Therefore as Thompson (1991: 8) reminds us, we must examine these ‘events’ as they are “... embodied in real people and in a real context.” In view of these considerations, we now need to look to the history as manifested in the protests and resistance of student activists themselves if we are to understand and explain the process of social formation (and transformation) and the processes involved in the evolution of this activism in sub-Saharan Africa.

Chapter 3

Politics, students and protest: the making of the student intelligentsia

3:1 Introduction

This chapter considers the historical development of student activism as part of the pre-independence intelligentsia in the years immediately preceding independence. It argues that students were politically privileged actors in the first two decades of independence, and discusses the general significance and the meaning of student activism. Their status as privileged political actors derived from the prominent role the student intelligentsia played in the struggles for national independence. The arguments review Northern texts on student activism, many written during the last great upturn in student protests in Europe and America in the 1960s and 1970s. This literature – though often exaggerating the importance of the student revolt – provides vital context and analysis of the phenomenon of student agency that does not exist elsewhere.

The final sections of the chapter – which focuses on the recent period of the democratic transitions – considers the political and economic aspects (the encountered circumstances) of the crisis in sub-Saharan Africa from the 1970s and the corresponding increase in popular resistance. How these changes impacted on higher education and student activism are discussed in chapter 4. This marked a process of rapid globalisation, which had a devastating effect for most of the continent (Cheru, 2005: 74-83). Students were one of the principal agencies of social change in the transitions, but they were now negotiating dramatically changed circumstances from the ones alluded to in the first section of the chapter. Increasingly they saw their status converge with the popular forces struggling against the misery and hardship of structural adjustment. But the tenacity of student activists ensured that through these transformations they maintained their status as politically privileged actors. As a consequence, this chapter is concerned with the theoretical arguments of structure and agency. Clearly in historical and geographically specific circumstances different social forces arise that have different capacities to exercise political agency. Structure can be seen, therefore, as a constraint (for some) and as an opportunity (for others).

3:2 'Class suicide' and the intelligentsia

To what extent can students be considered part of an intelligentsia? This question expresses a tension in the literature, where the 'intelligentsia' and 'student' are frequently used interchangeably. Even in Cliff's (1963) otherwise precise text there is a certain confusion between the two terms, and among contemporary student activists in Senegal and Zimbabwe the term 'intellectual' is often employed to describe their social role. There was a serious exploration of these questions during the 'student revolts' in the 1960s. Flacks (1973: 126) for example – reflecting many of the contradictions in the literature and debates at the time – defines the intelligentsia as “those engaged vocationally in the production, distribution, interpretation, criticism and inculcation of cultural values.” This group has grown from “small pockets of isolated, independent intellectuals” to become, in the course of several decades, a significant “stratum of the population, including many in new white collar vocations” (Flacks, 1973: 131). Although Flacks argued that 'New Left' students aspired to become members of the intelligentsia, he argued that the expansion of the intelligentsia has been largely due to the growth of university education, “The newest and largest generation of this stratum was thronging the nation's [United States] colleges” (Flacks, 1973: 131).¹³

It is argued that the principal reason for the conflation of student and intelligentsia in much of the African literature, is because students in much of the continent – particularly in the period immediately before and after independence – were engaged, as Flacks (1973: 126) describes, in the “in the production, distribution, interpretation, criticism and inculcation of cultural values.” However, it is important to situate these arguments in the political changes that were taking place across much of sub-Saharan Africa.

There are three vital and related aspects to the immediate pre-independence period in much of Africa. The first is that, contrary to much of the ideological and political beliefs

¹³ Is this a suitable definition of the 'intelligentsia'? Searching for an adequate definition is no simple task. Desai (1994: 21), for example, comments, “definitions of intellectuals are ... notoriously difficult.” Perry Anderson (1970) argues that intellectuals are those concerned with 'social reality' but some, for example, have argued that real intellectual work involves the political engagement with this social reality (Debray, 1981).

at the time, it was not – largely speaking – a working class and trade union leadership that led the struggles for independence. Although in many cases it was labour mobilisations after the world war which were crucial sparks to the nationalist movements, generally speaking it was another social group who took up the leading positions in the movements that were to oust colonial powers (see below). Secondly, the group that did assume the responsibility for leading nationalist struggles was what has been called the ‘intelligentsia’. This was made up largely of colonial staff, trade union bureaucrats and university students and graduates who had often been educated abroad on colonial scholarships and who had been immersed in a left-wing (frequently communist) milieu in American, British and French universities in 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.¹⁴ The third central factor during this period was the attraction among this ‘student-intelligentsia’ of the Soviet model of development (Davidson, 1992). The Soviet Union was regarded as offering the ‘intelligentsia’ of the third world the option of ‘raising’ their countries to a level of technological development equal to the advanced west. This project was often seen in terms of a radical project of socialist transformation, where the levers of state control could be wielded in the interests of the newly independent nation.

Future leaders developed their politics in student groups (Diané, 1990). Two organisations stand out: the West African Student Union (WASU), formed in 1925 in London, was regarded as the “training ground for Nigerian nationalists” (Federici, 2000: 90; see also Hanna and Hanna, 1975). WASU welcomed students from West Africa who found themselves in London, however briefly, often providing them with accommodation and support. However, WASU was not principally a welfare service but a political and campaigning union: it denounced colonial racism, forced labour, the expropriation of land and the unequal relationship linking the colonial metropolises with their African dependencies. Far from limiting its agenda to student issues, WASU sought to “agitate for and emphasise the needs of the future ‘United West Africa’” (Adi, 1998: 34).

Similar, and similarly radical, political organisations of Francophone African students were active in Paris: the *Association des Etudiants Sénégalais* (AES) and the

¹⁴ It is important to stress the fluidity of this category, so that members of the colonial civil services and trade union leaders were also frequently recent graduates. See chapter 5.

Fédération des Etudiants d'Afrique Noire en France (FEANF) were seen as crucial to the emergence of students as a distinct social group (Diop, 1993; Diaw, 1993; Diané, 1990). Marcel-Eloi Chambrier Rahandi (1990) a former activist and leading member of FEANF explained that the organisation ensured the political formation of a generation of soon-to-be African leaders, and crucially the union instilled an ideological coherence among the disparate communities of African students studying in France.¹⁵ Rahandi (1990: 16) describes these processes:

one learnt to live, to think and to act together, FEANF was a school where we took our first political lessons. It was within FEANF that African students formed a concept of African nationalism ... Through the practice and theory of the union they forged an idea of freedom.¹⁶

The list of those who were transformed by the metropolitan university and by their *luttres syndicales* in these countries testifies to the importance of the student/intelligentsia: Amilcar Cabral in Portugal, Leopold Senghor in France and Kwame Nkrumah in the US and Britain. The role students were going to play was never underestimated. Leopold Senghor, Senegal's first president addressed students in 1956, "you are the elite of the elite, the best elements of our people" (quoted in Cissé, 2001: 36) and it was generally believed that the next generation from the university would continue to play a leading role in post-colonial Africa.

Some of the more Eurocentric literature on student politics even suggests that it was the influence of western education on a group of Africans that instilled in them the desire for freedom, democracy and independence (Hanna, 1975). Undoubtedly one of the *unintended consequences* of the experience was to expose students to radical and left wing ideas. A key factor was the intellectual hegemony of Marxism in leftwing politics in European universities in the 1930s and 1940s. Along with these influences was the role played by black Marxists in political struggles in the United States and Europe (Georgakas and Surkin, 1998). It is clear that student militants and intellectuals

¹⁵ While these communities might not have been very numerous, their national unions certainly were. Diané (1990: 55-64) notes 14 African student organisations in France formed between 1947-1956, many with their head-quarters (and leading activists) in France.

¹⁶ "on apprenait à vivre, à penser, à agir en commun, une école [FEANF] surtout où nous fîmes nos premières classes politiques. C'est au sein de la FEANF que les étudiants africains ont pris conscience du fait national africain ... Par l'analyse et la pratiques des luttres syndicales, ils se sont forgés cet idéal de liberté."

achieved an intellectual and organisational hegemony that was unparalleled in colonial Africa.

It is vital not to underestimate the role played by trade unions in the struggles for independence in many countries. In both Zimbabwe and Senegal it was national strikes – on the railways in 1947/8 in Senegal and the general strike in Zimbabwe in 1948 – that were key to initiating the nationalist movements (see Munyaradzi, 2002; Ousmane, 1986). The 1945 general strike in Nigeria crippled the colonial machine for weeks leading to a period of ‘labour nationalism’ in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In Northern Rhodesia the Zambian trade union’s ‘official’ nationalist leadership agreed to an uneasy alliance, with the trade unions refusing to be completely subsumed into the Northern Rhodesian Congress (see Larmer, 2002). Several commentators have argued that, rather than the period signifying the ‘weakness’ of the organised working class, it was rather the “lack of a visionary and strategic labour leadership” of this class (see Aborisade, 2002: 93-7).

Many argue that the lack of such a leadership was largely due to the domination of the labour movements by Stalinism (Molyneaux, 1985). Stalinist-influenced politics insisted on broad alliances with nationalist organisations, as part of a two-stage process that would eventually lead to socialism. The first stage was to be the ‘democratic revolution’ that included winning independence, and only afterwards would there be a sustained struggle for socialism, once the foundations of a national capitalism had been established. Most communist and communist-inspired students, trade unionists and intellectuals from the third world believed they must proceed first to national independence, in broad class coalitions (Zeilig and Seddon, 2002).

Many had expected the working class to lead the struggle for national liberation, an argument advanced most convincingly by Trotsky (1969). Trotsky’s theory of ‘permanent revolution’ was predicated on the argument that the national bourgeoisie – historically responsible for the transition to ‘liberal democracy’ – was incapable of carrying out these tasks. They would be too terrified of the social forces that would be unleashed on the very things that they wanted to promote: private property, free trade and wage labour. The argument was that, if they had been unable to transform Russia, what chance was there in the colonial world setting, that systematically enfeebled the

development of an indigenous bourgeoisie (Blunt and Wills, 2000: 60-70). Often under the influence of Stalinist politics, a generation of western Africanists spent an eternity searching (largely in vain) for the emergence of an African bourgeoisie (Sender and Smith, 1986). Seddon (2002: 28-29) makes the essential historical point: “In most of Africa, the colonial state (serving the interests of metropolitan capital and, where settlers became more strongly rooted, of local settler capital) was at pains to inhibit the development of an indigenous African capitalist.”

In marked contrast to the absence of a nascent African capitalist class, the colonial state had succeeded in creating a significant stratum of functionaries that controlled many levels. Civil servants, teachers, nurses and clerks comprised a class that Poulantzas (1973) called a new petty bourgeoisie. The desire of colonial powers was to train and ‘civilise’ a class of functionaries, imbued with the superiority of western values (Ngugi, 1981: 69-71). In the period of decolonisation this process was speeded up with the hope that a willing and obedient intelligentsia could be handed the reins of state power – in a peaceful transition that would, largely speaking, leave the colonial structures of power intact (Njamnjoh and Jua, 2002). This was an inherently ambiguous (let alone risky) exercise for the colonial state, as it was from among these groups – intended to control the colonial states – that young educated radicals began to emerge. Many who were sent abroad on foreign scholarships would encounter and begin to engage with left-wing politics.¹⁷ As Seddon (2002: 30) reminds us, it is also important not to see the history of class struggle in Africa in terms of a “narrow definition of the working class ... [but rather we] must recognise the crucial (but often problematic) role played by the radical elements of the new petty bourgeoisie.”

Evidence for this has recently emerged in documents released by the Public Records Office (March 2003) describing the emergence of radical and communist ideas in “negro organisations” during the Second World War. Although the files concentrate on the consequences for the West Indian colonies, they betray the paranoia of the British

¹⁷ Nkrumah – future Ghanaian leader – was a case in point, boasting that while in London in the 1940s he would read the newspaper of the British communist party on the London underground (see Sherwood 1996). The role of Nkrumah in relation to students and the radical nationalist movement generally cannot be exaggerated and extended beyond Anglophone Africa. Diané (1990: 29) for example writes that, among students active in FEANF, he exerted a profound influence, not simply for his radical statements but as a politically engaged intellectual: “Nkrumah est un aîné, un précurseur et une sorte de miroir pour la nouvelle classe des intellectuels engagés.”

Secret Services at the growth of a black consciousness linked to an embryonic civil rights movement in the United States. The documents stress growing the radicalisation among groups of West African students studying in America. In a prolonged correspondence with the Colonial Office, staff at the British embassy in Washington reported with growing anxiety the activity of West African students studying in the United States. In 1944 they were particularly concerned about two Nigerians, Nwafor Orizu and Ozumba Mbadiwe, who were to go on to play a prominent role in the radical wing of Nigerian nationalism.¹⁸ A Colonial Office letter on the 3 January 1944 noted: "We have had a certain amount of correspondence with various Departments over the unsatisfactory position that tends to develop in the cases of many West Africans who have gone to America as students." Quoting another letter received the previous year on the alarming state of African students 'permitted' to study in the United States:

between 20 and 30 students from west African (sic) have been permitted to come to this country, supported by the promise of profoundly inadequate allowances from their relatives at home. A few are all right, quiet, industrious and serious; others are anything but. They get into debt; they flit from one soft-hearted university to the next, piling unfinished course upon unfinished course. Gradually they learn there is a market value attached to the pose of the exploited victim of British imperialism; they write books and they address meetings and they get taken up and used by groups whose interest is not at all any improvement to African conditions.¹⁹

The letter continued that Orizu and Mbadiwe are clearly from the latter category of unsavoury characters mixing with dangerous (presumably left-wing) elements. The conclusion was often that these problems could be solved from the 'financial angle' ensuring that West African students do not find themselves without resources and so resort to the "temptation to play to the anti-British gallery."²⁰

However, although the student-intelligentsia played a leading role, it could not do so without recourse to the mobilisation of the 'popular classes'. The role of the intelligentsia – Poulantzas' 'new petty bourgeoisie' – was disproportionately visible as the leadership of nationalist movements; these movements were frequently fuelled by

¹⁸ Nwafor Orizu later became the first president of the Nigerian Senate.

¹⁹ Public Record Office, Colonial Office 968/121/4.

²⁰ It is interesting that the solution was regarded as 'better funding' to prevent students falling in with anti-imperialist groups. How it could conceivably have been financially beneficial to fall in with the anti-colonial left is not made clear in the files. Maybe, however, they were paid to address meetings, write etc. Public Record Office, Colonial Office 968/121/4.

the mass mobilisations of other social groups. In the case of the general strike in Zimbabwe in 1948, the nationalist struggle was propelled into the limelight by a general strike, but the leadership of the strike came to be epitomised by Benjamin Burombo, a Bulawayo shop owner (Raftopoulos and Phimister, 1997). The trade union movement in the early 1950s was headed by the founding father of Zimbabwean nationalism, Joshua Nkomo, one of the country's first black graduates (see chapter 5).

The independence settlements compelled the student-intelligentsia who had lead the anti-colonial struggles to consolidate control in the existing state machinery. Many saw their role as liberators, taking their 'backward' societies into the modern (and frequently socialist) world (Adi, 1995). For Nkrumah, Senghor and Nyerere (the leaders of Ghanaian, Senegalese and Tanzanian independence) 'socialism' was embodied in the state, and in the state they felt themselves "above class antagonism generally" (Marx, 1984: 45). As antagonism had no place in their 'newly' founded societies, a classless discourse became a necessity in state control. The state in newly independent Africa became the means of carrying out state-capitalist development (Cliff, 1963). So, in the case of Ghana, once independence had been achieved, the movements that had been mobilised in the anti-colonial struggles (and these had been considerable) were abandoned (Davidson, 1992). This left the state as the only lever of power. After the first decade of independence (the 1960s), First (1970: 57-8) argued that the process of decolonisation had been a "bargaining process with co-operative African elites ... The former colonial government guarded its options and ... the careerist heirs to independence preoccupied themselves with an 'Africanization' of the administration."

Cliff (1963) offered perhaps the clearest analysis of the role of the 'intelligentsia' in the independent settlement, linking his theory of the 'deflected permanent revolution' to Trotsky's earlier arguments. He maintained that the failure of the working class to lead the movements for national independence and democracy in the third world, as postulated by Trotsky, was due to the relative inexperience of the working class (often but not always paralysed by the politics of Stalinised communist parties). The leadership of nationalist movements was frequently taken up by a student-intelligentsia in a process of 'deflected permanent revolution'. The lack of 'strategic' organisation among the working class was in contrast to the high level of political and organisational coherence among students and intellectuals.

Although Cliff's (1999: 67) argument must be seen as an elaboration (and clarification) of Trotsky's original theory, he also provided perhaps the clearest critique of the role of the 'intelligentsia' in developing societies, "as the leader and unifier of the nation, and above all as manipulator of the masses." The intelligentsia, he argued, always attempts to separate itself and rise above society. He describes the Russian populist movement in the 19th century as led by an intelligentsia that regarded itself as the unique liberator of the peasantry. However, a later intelligentsia, identifying itself with the emergent trade union movement, was forced to be accountable to the collective voice and organisations of the movement. The tendency towards individualism and elitism, Cliff (1963: 20) argued, is connected to the political and social milieu of the intelligentsia. Among Russian populist intellectuals their political milieu was "less restrictive, hence they showed clearer and much more extreme tendencies towards elitism, arbitrariness, as towards vacillations and splits." In the period of nationalist struggles the 'revolutionary' intelligentsia was a far more "cohesive factor" (Cliff, 1963: 20). The intelligentsia as a non-specialised section of society "is the obvious source of a 'professional revolutionary elite'" (Cliff, 1963: 20). It is ideally placed to do this because its members are able to pose as the radical – and neutral – arbiters of the nation, against sectional interests, but there is a further aspect to their role. The intelligentsia is the section of society with the clearest concept of national culture and identity, "the peasants and workers having neither the leisure nor education for it" (Cliff, 1963: 20).

It is, therefore, not simply their 'organisational coherence' but their status and self-identity as a student-intelligentsia, and partly a self-perception as politically privileged actors. This group saw themselves as the liberators of Africa, and as uniquely representing the emergent nation. As Cliff (1963: 20) wrote, "They are great believers in efficiency ... they hope for reform from above and would dearly love to hand the new world over to a grateful people, rather than see the liberating struggle of a self-conscious and freely associated people result in a new world themselves."²¹ This is linked intimately to a vital aspect of student activism that has been analysed by a number of writers (Federici, 2000; Mamdani, 1994; 1996). The distance students had to

²¹ These ideas were inextricably connected, as Cliff argued, to the attraction of the Soviet model that appeared to indicate that independence and development could be achieved by 'delinking' from the capitalist world (Amin, 1990).

travel from their countries – described in the literature as ‘pilgrimages’ made to the colonial schools and colleges in Africa and in Europe (Foucher, 2002) – divorced them from the concerns and realities of colonial life, where they became aware of the distance between their situation and the communities they had left, but crucially the gap between the west and the national marginalisation of their as yet unborn or new nations.²² This geographical element of the student experience remains key to their contemporary self-identity, expressed in the spatial separation from their family homes and lives in the modern (rarified) spaces of the university campus (see chapter 4). What effect did this have on student activism? It meant that as well as being forged into a “national-bureaucratic caste” (Boyer, 2002) by departing colonial powers, students regarded themselves and their activism as crucial to the development and leadership of the independent state.

The inherent elitism of the student-intelligentsia simultaneously generates a feeling of guilt and debt towards the ‘masses’, “and at the same time a feeling of divorcement from, and superiority to them. The intelligentsia are (sic) anxious to belong without being assimilated, without ceasing to remain apart and above” (Cliff, 1963: 20). Cliff argues that the heightened, one could say, exaggerated power of the intelligentsia derived directly from the “feebleness of other social classes, and their political nullity” (Cliff, 1963: 20).

For this thesis Cliff’s model serves as a powerful description of how change actually occurred, and the role of the student-intelligentsia in it. Indeed, Cliff’s analysis is an immensely useful description of the nature of student ‘elitism’, particularly in the first decade and a half of independence. The more student movements were integrated into broader structures and accountable to wider social forces, the more the elitism of their activism waned (and often the extent of their role in societal change clarified). Equally, the more isolated their activism – an ‘*isolation*’ that students frequently exulted in – the more elitist they became (Adorno and Marcuse, 1999).

²² An enormous amount of post-colonial African literature deals with the experiences of ‘educational’ separation and ambiguity. Three examples illustrate this well. In *No Longer at Ease* (1960) Chinua Achebe describes the difficult homecoming in newly independent Nigeria. Gani Fawehinmi (2002) describes the hardships that he faced as a student trying to survive in London in the early 1960s. This exposes another point, that students finding themselves in Europe and America were faced with some very uncomfortable realities. The Nigerian writer J P Clark in *America, Their America* (1962) brilliantly relates the racism that he confronted during his first year in the United States.

As we have seen, students believed that they embodied the aspirations of national liberation, they saw themselves as the liberators of Africa representing the emergent nation. Mamdani (1994) has taken up many of the processes Cliff described. Mamdani (1994: 253; 255) writes this liberation was undertaken by the '*petite bourgeoisie*' intelligentsia through the levers of the colonial state:

Intellectuals ... saw the state and not the class struggle as the motive force of development ... socialism was turned into a strategy for economic development, and no more. Development, in turn, was seen as a technical, supra-political and supra-social exercise. It was assumed that this 'objective' historical process would erase the 'backwardness' of the African people, rather than being itself the by-product of the struggle of that same people for social transformation.

From this perspective, it was difficult even to glimpse the possibility of working people in Africa becoming a creative force capable of making history. Rather, history was seen as something to be made outside this force, in lieu of this force and ultimately to be imposed on it.

However, student activism was not limited to the actions of a diasporic student population studying in Europe and America. Anderson (1991) saw student pilgrims as an essential element in the construction of successful nationalism.²³ For a time *École Normale William Ponty* in Dakar was the centre *par excellence* that received these student pilgrims from across west Africa. Later, the *Institut des Hautes Études* (a teaching college), also in Dakar and founded in 1950, served a similar purpose. It rapidly became a hotbed of anti-colonial agitation. As the principal study of the period describes:

the *Institut des Hautes Études* of Dakar absorbed all the graduates from the AOF into four schools ... Despite their small number and the surveillance that they are subject to these students ... will play a very important political role (Diané, 1990: 38).²⁴

²³ The idea of the 'pilgrimage' to Europe and America brought together African students who organised intellectual and cultural movements that shaped political consciousness for generations – notably the Harlem Renaissance in New York and Negritude in Paris. But we should also note that the 'pilgrim' is a student who makes a 'journey' to the university or school. Like a religious journey it is both physical, the student is separated from her community of origin, and spiritual, s/he undergoes intellectual development and transformation. The student becomes a committed member of a modern nation, and is able to identify with it. It was this class of 'pilgrims' in Senegal that was crucial in carrying out the project (or idea) of national construction.

²⁴ "l'Institut des Hautes Etudes de Dakar qui draine tous les bacheliers de l'AOF dans quatre écoles ... Malgré leur petit nombre et la surveillance dont ils sont l'objet, les étudiants de Dakar ... va jouer un rôle politico-syndical très important."

It provided colonial education for French West Africa, bringing together students from Guinea, Mali and Côte d'Ivoire. Students crossed Francophone West Africa until other secondary schools were built shortening the 'pilgrimage'. The impact on student identity was clear: the state was capable of creating solidarity between the pilgrims. Students acquired a specific identity that was linked to the colonial pilgrimage (Foucher, 2002).

Students were among the first to champion independence and question the political direction of self-appointed leaders of that independence. Still, as much of the literature cautions, student activism on the continent during the 1940s and 1950s was limited. Inevitably so, as Federici (2000: 90) explains: "Africa had only a handful of secondary schools and universities; thus those who made it to a college were an absolute minority, who in most cases had to study abroad, often spending many years away from their countries" (see also Rodney, 1981: 238-261). Diané (1990: 38) makes the same point, noting that after more than 50 years of French colonialism in 1946 not a single university had been created in French West Africa. In Guinea, with a population of three million, only 48 school students took entry exams to proceed to graduation.

The politically privileged position of students in much of the continent was linked to their 'exaggerated' role in the movements for independence (Boren, 2001). To be a student at the time was to be alienated from the social world many had emerged from. The sense of exclusion became the *raison d'être* of the student movement in the first decade of independence (Bathily, 1992). It was a key element to their politically privileged status. They saw themselves as the harbingers of European development, destined to bring about modernisation.²⁵ These ideas formed the backbone of much of the political and theoretical thinking in the immediate aftermath of the first wave of independence in Africa (Fanon 1960; Cabral, 1969).

²⁵ This idea is still an important one to student activists today. As one student described to me, "our parents speak from an African culture... whereas ours comes from Europe" ["les parents parlent de culture... africaine, [et] une culture qui nous vienne de l'Europe qu'on nous a apprise"] (Mor Faye interview 5 February 2004). These ideas are also discussed in Ngugi's classic *Decolonising the Mind* (1987).

Cabral gave a thorough examination of the contradictory identity of the ‘new petty bourgeoisie’. Although he reached the conclusion that independence had failed – “we accept the principle that the liberation struggle is a revolution and that it does not finish at the moment when the national flag is raised and the national anthem played”(1969: 87) – he saw the student-intelligentsia as uniquely equipped to bring about real liberation. He argued for the importance of class over ‘ethnicity’ and believed that the revolution would require what he termed an ‘ideal proletariat’ whom he saw as the ‘*petite bourgeoisie*’:

the stratum which most rapidly becomes aware of the need to free itself from foreign domination ... This historical responsibility is assumed by the sector of the petty-bourgeoisie which, in the colonial context, can be called revolutionary (1969: 88).

In place of a ‘real proletariat’ an ‘ideal’ one would be comprised of a class of students and intellectuals who would help create unity between the oppressed classes and combat ethnic divisions (1969: 89).

The ‘class suicide’ advocated by Cabral, required the ‘ideal proletariat’ to make a conscious effort to see the world not as a ‘nascent bourgeoisie’ but as ‘liberators and modernisers’. As Alexander (2003) explains, it necessitates “a superlative act of the imagination ... by means of which they can consistently and consequentially view the world from the angle of vision of the workers and peasants, who constitute the overwhelming majority of the people of the continent.” Students inherited a politically privileged role after independence that derived from their direct experience in the nationalist struggle and their subsequent role as a ‘transitory’ group in the post-colonial state. Their world oscillated between ‘visions of workers and peasants’ and urban privilege, contradictions which help to determine the nature of their activism in the first decades of independence.

3:3 Students: finding social position

As discussed above, students were a central element to the struggle to end colonialism, advocating and inspiring independence struggles from the 1930s. The university – the handful of higher education colleges and technical institutes that existed – became the contested ground where political leaders and democratic struggles found their voice. After independence both the student and university were transformed, often slowly and

reluctantly, into ‘national bodies’ with ‘national responsibilities’. Students could not continue to be part of a political vanguard contesting state authority; rather they had to become part of the project of reconstruction and development. The universities had to produce the ‘elites’ that could power development (Mamdani, 1994).

The university at independence in Africa, was, in the words of one commentator, an “implanted institution with largely expatriate staffs, metropole courses of study, and substantial political independence” (Hanna, 1975: 11). For ten years it was at the centre of various attempts to Africanise the state, to disentangle the academy from its colonial past and engage it with what were regarded as African realities. It was also the crucial training centre for very limited sections of society dedicated to the needs of a tiny proportion of the population: in the Congo in 1960 the entire university population was only 2,000 (Cafentzis, 2000).

In the immediate post-colonial period these prerogatives were to demarcate the parameters of student activity. Some commentators have perhaps overstated the ‘elitism’ of early student activism (O’Brien, 1996). Bianchini (2004) argues in the case of Senegal that a ‘real’ student movement did not emerge until after 1966, and Federici (2000: 91) states that for much of the 1960s and 1970s student politics was limited in scope by the need for students “to fill the empty spaces left by departing expatriates, and saw the expansion of higher education as a key condition for economic development.” However, close attention needs to be paid to the processes at work.

There was nothing particularly new with the way the post-independent African university was conceptualised by the post-colonial regimes. The ‘modern’ university in Europe was regarded as the principal arena for generating national culture in the 18th and 19th centuries. Philosophers and social reformers in the 19th century saw the university as the purveyor of cultural correctness in a modernising state (Ziolkowski, 1991). So it was not entirely surprising when President Nyerere of Tanzania explained in 1966:

I believe that the pursuit of pure learning can be a luxury in society ... Both in University-promoted research, and in the content of degree syllabuses, the needs of our country should be the determining factor ... The real problem is that of promoting, strengthening and channeling social attitudes which are conducive to the progress of our society (Nyerere, 1968: 179-184).

The university was seen as the force *par excellence* that could bring about the desired transformations. The effect of these ideas led to the direct control of university life by the state. In Tanzania it was relatively informal: research projects undertaken at the University of Tanzania had to be approved by the government. In the case of Nigeria, two years after General Gowon addressed the University of Ibadan, every university was under the direct control of the government. At the university in Ghana repeated opposition and violence arose over the question of ‘academic freedoms’. Nkrumah struck what became a predictable pose:

If reforms do not come from within, we intend to impose them from outside, and no resort to the cry of academic freedom ... is going to restrain us from seeing that our university is a healthy Ghanaian University devoted to Ghanaian interests (quoted in Hanna, 1975: 12-13).²⁶

The idea of the university as a vital conduit of dominant ideas was emphasised repeatedly in the 1960s. The paradox, however, was that the university was also one of the principal arenas contesting authority during the decade. Universities were both institutions of control and contestation. Althusser (1964) wrote directly to these themes: “the true fortress of class influence is the university ...[it] is by the very nature of knowledge it imparts to students that the bourgeoisie exerts its greatest control over them” (quoted in Anderson 1970: 214). For intellectuals and student militants in the 1960s the university was, therefore, the fortress *par excellence* where the *ancien régime* could be undermined (and in some of the more exaggerated claims even bought crashing down (Cockburn, 1969). Rudi Dutschke and Jurgen Krahel were two of the leading student revolutionaries in Germany in the 1960s. They asserted that students needed to become ‘urban *guerilleros*’. The university would be the shelter for this guerrilla war where they could “organize the struggle against institutions and state power. The university was to be the garrison of the Extra-Parliamentary Opposition” (Leslie, 1999: 120). The university was a space of great ideological and physical conflict.

²⁶ These were not uniquely African trends. In many developing countries the university was seen as well placed to provide the exact needs of ‘national development’. Cuba went through a similar transformation of higher education after 1959 (Anderson, 1997; Hochschild, 1973). The university in the developed world displays many of these characteristics today. In the UK the current emphasis is on ‘employability’ and the needs of employers.

These ideas received their most sophisticated exploration by Bourdieu (1990) who regarded the entire education system, not simply the university, as serving cultural reproduction. However, this was not the reproduction of neutral cultural values but the transmission of those of the dominant classes. He saw these classes as being in a position to control the reproduction of cultural ideas in the education system, presenting them as legitimate and unbiased. Bourdieu was making an explicit statement against a superior cultural form; he labelled possession of the dominant culture as cultural capital. The distribution of cultural capital is not even across society, and only those students from certain backgrounds had the necessary codes to unpick the ‘messages’ transmitted by the education system. The university was a crucial instrument for the ‘cultural reproduction’ of dominant ideas (Bourdieu, 1999). He also argued that the failure of those from working class backgrounds to succeed caused them to internalise their sense of failure, making them feel personally inadequate rather than critical of the system that led them to fail in the first place.

This concept of the university was not lost on a generation of post-independent African leaders. However, there was a contradiction in the idea of independent academic endeavour at the university in an environment that Altbach argues tends “to create a numerically significant group of dedicated and committed politicized students” (quoted in Nkomo, 1984: 6). After the first decade of independence the goals of national development were beginning to seem illusory, as employment for graduates declined. The unravelling of the national dream was destined to intensify political unrest. Emmerson observed these tensions more than thirty years ago:

As the student community within the nation expands ... as attempts are made to reorient higher education toward new national priorities and as the old anti-colonial consensus is fragmented ... the university tends to lose its former position of ‘splendid isolation’ (Emmerson, 1968: 407).

It was both the breakdown of the anti-colonial consensus and the disintegration of economic and political development of the new nation that saw student resistance escalate. These tensions gave way to a fractious relationship between the state and the university and impacted on the nature of political unrest on the campus and on the identity of the post-colonial students (Hanna and Hanna, 1975).

In the first decade of independence writers have described a social pact between students and the state, seen as an implicit guarantee that had ensured employment in the formal economy for university graduates. The state had been able to create a certain degree of solidarity between the institutions of the state and students, but this 'solidarity' was premised on the reward of graduate employment (Foucher, 2002b). It is also true that students were optimistic about the future social order. Inevitably this resulted in a certain symmetry of interests between the newborn state and student identity. Although these factors had an important impact on student activism, they did not prevent the emergence of oppositional politics on the campus across Africa in the 1960s and 1970s (Hanna, 1975). Federici argues that in Tanzania in 1966 students defended their elitism against President Nyerere on the question of their participation in national service. He argues that similar confrontations were witnessed in Ghana and Mozambique (Federici, 2000:105; Barkan, 1975).

Indeed, despite the alleged 'social pact', student activism was a persistent (and irritating) feature of political life in the early process of decolonisation, prompting a number of important investigations into the subject (Hanna and Hanna, 1975). In the Côte d'Ivoire students contested Houphouët-Boigny's vocal support for the Algerian war while pan-Africanist protests demonstrated the political consciousness of student groups. In Senegal students demonstrated outside the American embassy after Nkrumah was deposed in 1966, a factor that made their role in the revolt in 1968 possible (Bianchini, 2002; 2004). While many of the early demonstrations and activism were concerned with the end of minority rule in Africa, in South Africa and Rhodesia the issue of educational reform was also key. The Africanisation of the university administration that had been dominated by white professors and lecturers became an important demand (Bathily, 1992).

Student action was limited in the first few years of independence, and more often than not they could be found supporting the state. Zimbabwe was typical in this respect where students 'limited' their activism in the first half of the 1980s to 'external protests' against foreign embassies ('imperialists') and even gave vocal support to the regime in place (see chapter 5). But as the state sought to increase the supply of trained personnel, civil servants and bureaucrats, an expansion in the enrolment of students in university

followed. Although student enrolment was only just hovering above one percent of the age-cohort in the mid-1960s, it was going to reach three percent (World Bank, 2000).

The expansion of student numbers – small though it was – meant that universities were no longer simply the training ground of the ruling classes. While the majority of the highest state functionaries and professors were still part and parcel of the post-colonial ruling elite, increasingly many students (and their parents) were not. However the university had not become ‘proletarianised’, and universities for at least the first decade and half (from 1960-75) were largely privileged institutions (Hanna, 1975; Frederic, 2000). The overwhelming majority of students were from ‘professional and managerial’ families, a section of the population which, at that time, had lifestyles and opportunities far superior to the great majority (Frederic, 2000).

How then should students be categorised after independence? It would be misleading to give them a ‘special’ social class, or even allocate them to one already existing. Rather students who had emerged from the social milieu of the student-intelligentsia in the pre-independence period now became a ‘transitory grouping’, “young people whose final ... positions have not been determined” as Harman describes (1988: 41). However this ‘transitory’ category was one that was held for a brief moment; the effect of economic crisis in the 1970s fundamentally altered their status again. One study described their social position well: “Students ... are only in transition, over which they have no control because they have no impact on the socio-economic stakes” (Bathily *et al*, 1995: 401).²⁷

The concept of students as a ‘transitory’ category, and not as a separate class in themselves was taken up repeatedly in the literature in the 1960s. Many of these arguments arose as a result of the upsurge of student revolts in campuses in America and Europe; bookshelves were deluged by case studies, anthologies and ‘calls to arms’. These books were frequently written by student activists and young members of the ‘new left’ (see for example Cockburn and Blackburn, 1969; ²⁸ Weaver and Weaver 1969; Crick and Robson, 1970; Lipset and Schaflunder, 1971). Many of the arguments in these studies exaggerated the role of student revolts; for example Touraine (1968)

²⁷ It is important to stress that although their status as a ‘transitory group’ has changed today, their relationship to ‘socio-economic stakes’ has not.

²⁸ As a slightly frivolous – though curious – point, the average age of the 13 contributors to this collection was 24.3 (the student radical David Widgery was only 20).

made the assertion that in ‘post-industrial societies’ the working class, regarded as the force that could power social transformation, had ceded its position to university students, who had become the ‘new proletariat’. “Thus, is not the student movement, in principle at least, of the same importance as the labour movement of the past?” (quoted in Stedman Jones, 1969: 26). The argument was that as knowledge and technical progress were at the centre of the new society, as capital accumulation had been in industrial society, universities had become the new factories (and students the new workers). As a consequence, the rise of student revolts was not a transitory phenomenon, but symbolic of their new position in the forces of production (the production of knowledge and technical progress).

We should note, however, that the desire to find a ‘new’ – or in Cabral’s case ‘ideal’ – proletariat was overwhelming among commentators and academics during the 1960s. Marcuse made perhaps the most thorough attempt to dislodge the old working class, which, he argued, had become incorporated into the system (see below). The attempts to find a new social agency to replace a co-opted and docile proletariat were linked both to a sincere attempt to analyse new social movements, specifically student protest, and also represented a more profound political reality. As we saw in the previous section the search for a ‘new proletariat’ was connected to the role played by a student-intelligentsia in the developing world, which had appeared to supplant the political mobilisation of other groups. For radical students in the 1960s and 1970s – who looked to national liberation struggles for inspiration – the lessons of Cuba and China, and of liberation movements in Africa were clear: a dedicated and devoted minority could bring about revolutionary change. Che Guevara’s statement, “if you are a revolutionary, make a revolution” (quoted in Harman, 1988: 36-7) seemed to epitomise the period, and the role of student-revolutionaries in social change.

The radical critique of these arguments highlighted three major weaknesses. Stedman Jones (1969) argued, firstly, that students did not constitute a separate class; while the situation for the working class is permanent – a ‘life situation’ – the most important social characteristics of students is their ‘transience’. Secondly, students were also heading for senior positions in the job market, and that also marked them apart from the working class: “their social destination is either into professional groups or else into the managerial, technocratic class itself” (Stedman Jones, 1969: 28). The third argument

centres around the nature of contemporary society, many writers at the time arguing that the centres of production had not been fundamentally changed and there were no grounds to characterise society as ‘post-industrial’ (Sweezy, 1968). While students might have become the centre of political focus in the 1960s, it was not because “they have stepped into the shoes of an obsolete proletariat” (1969: 29).

Students do not have a privileged relationship to the productive process – as they neither own nor manage the processes of production. In this sense there is no question that student activism could ever generate in itself the necessary social force to transform society. On the contrary their activism is determined by imponderables that they have no control over: employment of graduates, price levels and economic policies, in short the vital ‘socio-economic stakes’ of society. Referring to student protest in the 1960s, Panitch reminds us that “the class struggle was [never] going to be resolved at the university” (quoted in Beckett, 2004: 20).²⁹ This did not, however, protect students from the vagaries of social change. One 1975 study described them as an ‘oppressed group’ isolated on campus and buffeted by economic forces that they could not control (Callinicos and Turner, 1975). Students, though ‘transitory’, had no control over the content of subjects, recruitment to the university, or the prices that they had to pay for accommodation, books and food.

Although students had not supplanted the ‘proletariat’ as many argued, this did not enfeeble their activism. Their ‘elitism’ often powered their action (see section 3:2 above), where they often sought to rise above society, a feature of student activism that is still important today. The slogan of the Zimbabwe student movement today – ‘voice of the voiceless’ – expresses this elitism. Students still boast about being at university and not college or polytechnic (John Bomba interview 22 May, 2003). Halliday (1969), arguing about third world student movements, noted that although students are a ‘transitory’ social group they have the capacity to act as a political vanguard: “Their relatively privileged social status ... often makes student protests possible, when all other social groups are shackled by military coercion”. This privileged role, however, has serious limitations:

²⁹ Panitch is referring to Ralph Miliband’s position on student action in the 1960s. Miliband wrote about the lack in the student movement of “any culture which is even approximately Marxist ... which no doubt sounds square, but is nevertheless the case. Sit [- in] they can but think is another matter” (quoted in Beckett, 2004: 20).

This vanguard role ... is an index of the restricted level of political development in any given country. For students are not a social class and cannot transform society. Their resistance to tyranny may often be heroic but there are constant limitations. Student consciousness is highly volatile. It is often hard to sustain a student movement beyond the initial provocation (Halliday, 1969: 323).

The students' 'transitory status' had an important impact on their activism. It meant that political and ideological conflict in society could become amplified in the politicised spaces of the university campus (see chapter 4). Harman (1988: 42) writes "whole sections of the student population are expected to absorb the ruling ideology, so as to be able to transmit it to others when they graduate." However, if those ideas stood in stark contrast to social reality, students are among the first to be thrown into "intellectual turmoil and can react with indignation" (Harman, 1988: 42). Even though – during periods of heightened activism in the late sixties in Senegal for example – student protests would often be triggered by material concerns, the movement would often rapidly develop an explicitly political agenda.

African university students, even during their so-called period of political vanguardism in the late 1960s and 1970s, were not always 'political'. As Harman argues, it was precisely their ambiguous status – caught between social groups – that caused students to react so powerfully when they realised the nature of the post-colonial state. Many activists had spent years believing (and defending) the state's progressive role, while being told that they were going to inherit and strengthen the nation. The 'betrayal' student activists felt during this early period in Zimbabwe helps explain why they frequently reacted so violently (see chapter 5). The betrayal was about more than their personal well-being. It was also about the direction of the state and was seen therefore as an ideological treachery.

Many student activists from the 1960s in the United States and Europe expressed an anger and disillusionment that often fuelled the ferocity of early student revolts during the period. Mario Savio (1965: 5) was one of the leading figures of the Berkeley University Free Speech Movement (FSM) in the 1964; "many of us came to college with what we later acknowledge were rather romantic expectations, perhaps mostly unexpressed at first, about what a delight and adventure learning would be. We really

did have unanswered questions searching for words, though to say so sounds almost corny ... But once at college we quickly lost much of the romantic vision.” It was this generation of angry and disillusioned students – which Draper (1965) termed ‘non-ideological radicals’ – that helped to energise the first student mobilisations.

Hal Draper (1965: 162), in a detailed study of the Berkeley student revolt, describes how this clash of expectations explained the volatility of early student activism:

This was the explosiveness of uncalculated indignation, not the slow boil of planned revolt. In many cases it was born of the first flash of discovery that the mantle of authority cloaked an unsuspected nakedness. The experienced radical on campus did not consider this to be news ... There is first love; there is the first baptism of fire; there is the first time that you realise your father had lied; and there is the first discovery of the chasm between the rhetoric of Ideals and the cynicism of Power among the pillars of society.

It was in these circumstances, Draper argues, that ‘non-ideological radicals’ became the most explosive element in the student movement. Paradoxically, it also explains one of the principal strengths of student action. Infused by a powerful indignation student activists were “able to win so much because they didn’t know it was ‘impossible’”. Older radicals and activists may feel oppressed by a careful analysis of the balance of forces, whereas student “naiveté and inexperience was as a shield and a buckler to them” (Draper, 1965: 163).

However, the explosiveness of early student activism was combined with an explicit elitism. In their first serious mobilisations student activists in Zimbabwe referred to themselves as ‘revolutionary intellectuals’ fighting on behalf of the nation (and even the one-party state). Their activism was often seen in terms of their unique ability to confront the status quo. Although they were able to advance a critique of the regime – on realising that ‘their father [Mugabe in this case] had lied’ – before the trade union movement, without the support from this movement they remained important, though ultimately peripheral, critics of the regime (see chapter 5). And they regarded themselves as custodians of society, uniquely placed to change it.

The nature of student activism – a combination of seemingly explosive spontaneity and elitism – found a theoretical basis in the work of the ‘Frankfurt school’ and Marcuse

and Adorno. Their rather pessimistic arguments maintained that late capitalist society was 'closed' and that the only serious systemic challenge could come from the third world (and enlightened intellectuals). While the consciousness of the working class had become paralysed, only 'students' and 'intellectuals' could cut a hole in the closed and hegemonic system. As we have seen, this was part of the search for a new proletariat. Marcuse saw the student-intelligentsia playing part of this role, and he was an important champion and advocate of student resistance in the 1960s and 1970s.³⁰ In an otherwise pessimistic conclusion to his chief work, *One Dimensional Man* (1964), where the working class has become incorporated into the system that it was historically destined to overturn, he sees a space for resistance. The agency for this transformation is made up of a "substratum of the outcasts and outsiders", together with elements of the intelligentsia, "the most advanced consciousness of humanity" (Marcuse, 1964: 256-7).

At the end of the 1960s, Marcuse (1999) had become an even more forthright defender of the student movement. In a prolonged correspondence, he admonishes his former collaborator (and comrade) Adorno for his conservatism. The student movement was now, according to Marcuse, "the strongest, perhaps the only, catalyst for the internal collapse of the system of domination today". The student movement could act as a catalyst in the social struggles of much wider layers of society, that included agitation "in the ghettos, in the radical alienation from the system of layers who were formerly integrated, and, most importantly, in the mobilization of further circles of the populace against American imperialism" (1999: 133).

Although students' activism might have been enfeebled by their separation from the production process it was partly freed from not having any connection to it. They could take action without worrying (excessively) about family and income. They could also meet and organise in substantial freedom without the discipline and punishment of a workplace. In addition "the initial outraged minority of students could take action on the campus without being held back by the indifference and even hostility of the majority –

³⁰ He appears in a large number of the student compendiums of the time, and students referred to him as the theorist of their revolts (Cooper, 1968). It should be noted that his arguments were always more nuanced and sophisticated than many of his latter-day critics maintain. Harman (1988) is particularly hard on him, ignoring the brilliant critique of contemporary capitalism provided in *One Dimensional Man* (1964). In later work he warned 'inexperienced' student activists that the "pre-condition for the efficacy of a serious opposition remains the political revitalisation of the working-class movement on an international scale" (1991: 368).

something rarely possible for workers in a factory or office” (Harman, 1988: 47). However, the illusion that the campus was a free (or at least freer) space was often bought crashing down, as the police and army invaded the university during student mobilisations.

But it was the students’ transitory character – their lack of ‘socio-economic stakes’ – that ensured that early mobilisations experienced explosive peaks and then sharp decline.³¹ Although they could organise effective university-wide unions, these were not able to put the authorities under permanent (or paralysing) pressure. When their activism was most successful (again 1968 in Senegal or Zimbabwe in the 1990s) it was precisely because they were able to help unleash a more ‘permanent and paralysing’ movement connected to the trade unions. The ‘hit and run’ element of student activism did, however, ensure that they frequently forced governments onto the defensive, and to concede to many of their demands. These cycles of mobilisation became a constant feature of student activism.

In addition, the decline of the movement did not mean that the campus reverted to its old and apolitical self. On the contrary, the upsurge in student action in the late 1960s and 1970s fundamentally altered the political environment on many campuses. Although the wave of protest ebbed and flowed, actions drew more students into an increasingly politicised environment. What Harman (1988: 49) writes about the European and American student movements in the late 1960s applies equally to what was happening in many parts of Africa: “The phase of ‘spontaneous’ upheaval and ‘charismatic’ leadership gave way to a phase of hard, and often bitter, arguments between those with different views as to the way forward.”

Higher education (and consequently student activism) was transformed in Africa from the 1970s, under the impact of economic recession and structural adjustment (see chapter 4). However, these processes were not limited to Africa. From the 1970s, according to Bauman, the ‘western’ university lost many of its functions, usurped by

³¹ Cliff (1976: 439) described student mobilisation as rising like a rocket and falling like a stick. In an interview in 1970 he described students as ‘manic depressives’, acting swiftly and angrily but unable to sustain their action. However, students do have a special capacity to act: “It is easier for students to act because a minority of students can act on their own to start with. Workers cannot go on strike in a minority – for students it is much easier to act. But their impact is far more limited, and therefore students rise like a rocket and fall like a stick.”

other ‘agencies’ (think-tanks, policy and research institutes and privatised consultancies). This has led to the commodification of knowledge connected to a neo-liberal agenda that views education as a ‘good’, “as procurable and securable ‘information’, rather than as a qualitative, experimental capacity for analysis and judgement which must be cultivated through education” (Boyer, 2002: 207). In large parts of Africa the instruments of this ‘commodification’ were World Bank and IMF-initiated reforms. These processes led to the polarisation of higher education in western societies, where a minority of privileged institutions – the ivy league universities in America and Oxford and Cambridge in the UK – are able to remain faithful to an earlier (and idealised) world of intellectual endeavour and educational pursuit (greatly assisted by private endowments) while most institutions of higher education are caught in a web of marketisation. They have become client-driven, providing an increasingly self-funded service to larger bodies of students.³²

It is important to place the ‘crisis’ of African universities since the 1970s in a global context (Boyer, 2002: 213). Indeed many authors have seen the experiences of ‘structural adjustment’ as a variant of a neo-liberal agenda that has not spared any region (Klein, 2000; Bond, 2002). In chapter 4 it is argued that the ‘crisis’ is symptomatic of the global drive for neo-liberal reforms that have had a catastrophic impact on higher education not only in Africa but also in the West.³³ The emphasis of these reforms in Africa has been on rising fees for students - ‘cost recovery’ in the euphemism of the World Bank – and the reprioritisation of educational provision to primary schooling on the grounds of a ‘higher economic return’ (and also as part of their anti-poverty agenda). In the third world the discourse has been mediated through international agencies of development, principally the World Bank and IMF, that see university education as a luxury commodity that African economies cannot afford

³² There has been recent controversy in England about the increase in tuition fees for students in the government’s White Paper on Education (2003). The argument centres on the increase in annual fees, allowing universities flexibility to levy £3,000 per year. The argument is that graduates will earn £400,000 more in their life times as a result of having been at university. Some have disputed this reasoning, maintaining that these figures are based assumptions from students in the 1960s, when a small percentage of young people went to university compared to more than 43 per cent today (*Socialist Review*, February 2003).

³³ During the writing up of the thesis through the winter and spring 2004/5 in Paris I witnessed an extraordinary movement of ‘lycéens’ (high school students) who demonstrated across France against ‘la loi Fillon’ of the Education Minister Francois Fillon. The reforms include the reorganisation of the national education system, and they were widely criticised as adapting education to the exigencies of the business world (see *Libération* 17 February 2005).

(Nyamnjoh and Jua, 2002). In the West the commercialisation of higher education has seen both the reduction in state funding to universities and the enticement of private financing and sponsorship. While the crisis is a global one, there are vital elements to it that are peculiar to the experience of universities in Africa, specifically the colonial legacy that saw higher education as a way civilising ‘native subjects’ (Fanon, 1961) and, as we have seen in the years proceeding independence, as a system for forging a ‘national-bureaucratic caste’ from the student-intelligentsia (see section 3:2 above).

The following section looks briefly at the collapse of many post-independence dreams, when, with the onset of economic crisis, a process began that unravelled the elitism of university students. Consistent with the theoretical foundations of the thesis, the emphasis is on the ‘hidden’ protests that emerged alongside these macro processes. I am seeking to identify the structural dynamics constantly limiting and producing social and cultural forms, while at the same time recognising the ability of ordinary men and women, through their struggles around exploitation and oppression, to bring about social change in the transitions described (see also Seddon and Zeilig, 2005). The successive waves of protest are described alongside the macro (structural) transformations (of ‘encountered circumstances’).

3:4 Crisis and structural adjustment 1975 – 1990: Economic downturn and adjustment

The period from 1975 saw a combination of apparently contradictory features that included a deepening of the economic crisis that had started at the beginning of the decade and a series of new struggles (Walton and Seddon, 1994). The first period marked the end to the long boom, and what now appeared to be the myth of rapid economic development directed by the state. In the early 1970s industrial production had slumped in the advanced economies by ten percent in one year, while international trade had fallen by 13 percent (Hobsbawm, 1995: 405). It is possible to identify 1973 as a decisive year. OPEC raised the price of oil which led to the seemingly contradictory high levels of lending to African countries at low interest rates (as commercial banks were flooded with ‘petrodollars’) (Hancock, 1989). The recession had a catastrophic effect throughout Africa. Most countries were still economically dependent on their former colonial masters, relying on the export of one or two primary products. So in

1975, for example, Ghana and Chad depended on coffee and cotton respectively for more than two thirds of their exports. Zambia depended on copper for half of its GDP, so the collapse in its price meant that by 1977 it received zero income from its most important export (Marfleet, 1998: 104). One study concluded that “regions already marginal to international capitalism were further marginalised and even the protective edifice of state capitalism that was still being constructed in Africa was impotent to resist the violence of these slumps” (Zeilig and Seddon, 2002: 10).

During this period the paths of ‘autonomous national development’ adopted by existing African regimes were increasingly undermined, as the global economic crisis deepened and mounting debts drove governments to seek external flows of capital, usually under ever more stringent conditions of lending. If the crisis of the late 1970s and early 1980s was an international crisis, much of the ‘pain of adjustment’ was borne by the developing countries, and particularly by those that relied heavily on oil imports, agricultural exports and on borrowing from the West (see Zeilig and Seddon, 2002).

These developments are frequently re-conceptualised today as elements of an emerging ‘globalisation’ (see Alexander, 2001). The Marxist geographer David Harvey (1989) was one of the first scholars of ‘globalisation’, describing it as speeding up of ‘time-space compression.’³⁴ He saw this phenomenon as Marx described it as the ‘annihilation of space by time’ (quoted in Massey, 1994: 146). The compression in Harvey’s formulation refers to the shrinking of space by time in late capitalist society. This society is, according to Harvey (1989: 240) “characterised by speed-up in the pace of life... so overwhelming spatial barriers that the world sometimes seems to collapse inwards upon us.” These processes have seen the uneven interconnection of economies, which many argue has historically characterised the development of capitalism (Capps and Panayiotopoulos, 2001). Time-space compression has also seen the acceleration of movement and communication across space, which Massey (1994: 147) colourfully describes as the extent “to which we can move between countries, or walk about the

³⁴ *Time-space compression* for Harvey (1989) is not a definition of globalisation; indeed he sees the ‘annihilation of space by time’ as characteristic of capitalist relations of production. The post-modern condition has accelerated this process (see for a historical discussion 1989: 240-259). Harvey’s post-modernism is resolutely Marxist, as he writes “a history of successive waves of time-space compression generated out of the pressures of capital accumulation with its perpetual search to annihilate space through time and reduce turnover time, we can at least pull the condition of postmodernity into the range of a condition accessible to historical materialist analysis and interpretation” (Harvey, 1989: 306-307).

streets at night, or venture out of hotels in foreign cities.” Yet even these processes are geographically and socially bound, limited to a relatively small number of privileged people. Massey insists, therefore, on a ‘power geometry’ of time-space compression that focuses on specific social groups which have distinct relationships to these processes (1994: 149-50).

Noam Chomsky (2000) describes two phases that correspond broadly with the understanding of ‘globalisation’ in this thesis. Globalisation represents Phase Two of capitalist development since the Second World War and consists of those processes that unpick the ‘social democratic’ reforms characteristic of Phase One. Walton and Seddon (1994) identify how during Chomsky’s Phase Two of post-war capitalist development, loans turned into debts and, as the process of global adjustment and restructuring required by the international capitalist crisis proceeded, more and more African states found their options severely restricted and their macro-economic policies increasingly shaped by the conditions imposed upon them (Walton and Seddon, 1994). This process received a boost with the election of the free market governments of Thatcher and Reagan. Both developed policies that shifted the focus onto the market and the private sector. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank became the central purveyors of these policies. As the World Bank reported at the time, “Africa needs not just less government – [but] government that concentrates its efforts less on direct intervention and more on enabling others to be productive” (quoted in Sandbrook, 1993: 3).

For most African economies, ‘structural adjustment’ preceded more far-reaching economic and institutional reforms associated with varying degrees of economic liberalisation and privatisation. Structural adjustment programmes were the conditions attached to IMF and World Bank loans. The terms of the loans required states to ‘adjust’ their economies; privatise national industries, remove tariff barriers and “open up to the outside world” exposing the economy to international competition and the free market – and hence dependence on the global marketplace (Bond, 2002).

3:5 Protest and austerity

The social cost of economic liberalisation and the austerity policies that followed fell

disproportionately on what have been called the popular classes (Seddon, 2002). Seddon and Zeilig (2005: 12) define the heterogeneity of these forces:

They may include not only the urban and rural working classes (consisting of those who have little or no control or ownership of the means of production and only their labour to sell, whether in the formal or the informal sector) but also other categories, including on the one hand those whom Marx refers to as ‘paupers’ and on the other small peasants and tenant farmers, ‘independent’ craftsmen and artisans, small retailers and petty commodity producers, and members of the ‘new petty bourgeoisie’ (sometimes called ‘the new middle classes’) generally including the lower echelons of the public sector. Not only do these various social categories constitute, in effect, the relative surplus population, which may be characterised as a reserve army of labour, they often share a consciousness of their interdependency and common vulnerability.³⁵

This motley social grouping is not an entirely new phenomenon in sub-Saharan African political economy. Certain commentators (e.g. First 1977) argue that African patterns of development had created a hybrid class (the peasantry), founded on a twin rural and urban identity. The hybridity of the African social forms received a postmodernist gloss in the 1990s, in which ethnicity and culture came to be seen as more determinant of social behaviour than alleged class membership (Bhabha, 1995).

However, what is undeniable is that the crisis of ‘globalisation’ led to a reorganisation of the continent’s social worlds, though with great regional variation. As Harrison (2002: 113) has argued, “there is a real political economy of hybridization: the real import of culture within the workplace can only be understood within this defining context.” These changes transformed the ‘social forces’ that were active during the ‘democratic transitions.’ The effect of reforms associated with structural adjustment programmes was to unleash what some have described as ‘waves of protests’ (Walton and Seddon, 1994; Dwyer and Seddon, 2002). The first ‘wave’ can be seen developing from the late 1970s until the late 1980s. Although there is much disagreement in the literature about the nature of the resistance against this austerity, there is little question about its actual occurrence. Some, for example, have argued that the role and reaction of the ‘popular classes’ was ‘defensive’, only geared towards survival (Saul and Leys, 1999); others have disputed this, arguing that these struggles have also been ‘offensive’ – resisting, protesting and changing the policies and challenging those interests that they

³⁵ To which should also be added university students.

identified as affecting them (Harrison, 2002).

In more limited respects, in all of the countries, popular protest had a political impact; in virtually all cases, it produced a rapid reversal of cuts in subsidies, and a far greater awareness of the political limits to rapid structural adjustment and economic liberalisation; in some cases it resulted in political changes and a greater degree of political openness (Seddon, 2002). Even Saul (2003: 192) admits that these struggles opened up “further space for groups in civil society to openly practise politics.” The ‘focus’ of these protests were often the international financial agencies (particularly the IFIs), but also the governments which adopted the austerity policies and the representatives of the big corporations (foreign and national) which benefited from ‘liberalisation’. Some have argued that in this way these struggles were a precursor to the contemporary phenomenon of the anti-globalisation movement (Dwyer and Zeilig, 2002; see also chapter 8). It is widely acknowledged that throughout the continent during the late 1970s and the 1980s, these popular struggles sought to resist the austerity policies of their governments (Gills, 2000). The resistance was characterised by street demonstrations, marches, strikes and other forms of public action, often (and questionably) referred to as ‘bread riots’. It is important to make clear that the wave of popular protest during the late 1970s and the 1980s was experienced across many countries in the developing world.

Although it is important not to over-romanticise these protests, nevertheless it is misleading and patronising to characterise them simply as ‘desperate IMF riots’ taking place in “wretched Third World cities ... where organization and democratic traditions of struggle are simply lacking” (Bond and Mayakiso, 1996: 6). It is also unhelpful to try to divide, as inherently distinct and effectively antagonistic, ‘workers’ struggles’ and ‘populist forms of socio-political movement’ (Petras and Engbarth, 1988).

3:6 The second wave of protest

The reality is that in sub-Saharan Africa, during the 1980s, as economic reforms continued, so too did popular protests, although by now they were becoming less spontaneous and more organised, and more overtly political, fuelling what became known in academic literature as democratic transitions. But by 1989, Africa was about

to undergo another wave of popular protest hardly noticed in the West but as far reaching as the changes that brought down East European 'communism', and sparking a renewed interest in democratic and popular struggle in Africa (Bratton, 1997; Wiseman, 1996; Allen, 1995).

From 1989, political protests rose massively across sub-Sahara Africa; where there had been approximately twenty recorded incidents of political unrest annually in the 1980s, in 1991 alone 86 major protest movements came into existence across 30 countries. By 1992 many African governments had been forced to introduce reforms and in 1993 fourteen countries held democratic elections. In a four-year period, from the start of the protests in 1990, a total of thirty-five regimes had been swept away by a combination of street demonstrations, mass strikes and other forms of protest (but also under pressure from IFIs), and by presidential and legislative elections that were often the first held for a generation (Bratton, 1997). The speed with which these changes took place surprised many commentators, "Compared with the recent experiences of Poland and Brazil ... African regime transitions seemed frantically hurried" (Bratton, 1997: 5). It was during the 1990s in Senegal and Zimbabwe that popular opposition reached a climax. This dramatic increase in protest, connected to the pauperisation of society, saw renewed and equally dramatic struggles on campuses across the continent (see chapter 4). These protests were not limited to 'campus demands' but frequently converged with wider social movements.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union was, in many ways, a cataclysmic event for opposition parties and trade unionists across Africa. It was an event that simultaneously inspired popular struggles on the continent, and in many ways weakened them. Within a very short space of time the politics that had helped to sustain democratic resistance (and the thousands of activists across the continent) collapsed. Regimes that had used the cover of 'Marxism-Leninism' were hugely weakened by the collapse of the Berlin Wall. This gave an enormous impetus to the movements that sought to dislodge them. However, the opposition was left without its ideological moorings, student politics without their political *raison d'être*. Many commentators previously on the left rushed to proclaim a new faith in the market. Andre Gunder Frank was typical in arguing at the time that these policies resulted in "enormous strides in the ... economic and political direction" of the third world (quoted in Harman, 1993: 79).

Even by the mid-1980s regimes that had kept the banner of 'Marxism-Leninism' flying introduced programmes mirroring IMF-led structural adjustment. The effect of these changes on the politics, organisation and outcomes of the movements in the 1990s was large, and the ability of students to exercise political agency was significantly weakened.

Two examples are presented here to illustrate what was happening in this period. In the West African state of Bénin, the process started in 1989. Students demonstrated against the government in January, demanding overdue grants and a guarantee of public sector employment after graduation. The government, crippled by financial scandals, capital flight and falling tax revenue, thought it could respond as it had always done, by suppressing the protest; but the movement grew during the year to incorporate the trade unions and the urban poor. Halfway through the year, in the hope of placating the demonstrators, President Mathieu Kérékou invited a human rights campaigner into his government. In a pattern followed by other countries, he set up a commission that would eventually create a 'national reconciliation conference' and which included the opposition movement, trade unions, students and religious associations. Emboldened by events, trade unionists, led by postal workers and teachers, left the government controlled National Federation of Workers' Union of Benin. By the end of the year, the capital, Cotonou, was convulsed by mass demonstrations. When Kérékou attempted to befriend demonstrators during one of these protests he was jeered and threatened, and forced to flee (Decalo, 1997: 53-60). In February 1990, the National Conference of Active Forces declared itself sovereign and dissolved Kérékou's national assembly. Obstinate he still insisted, 'I will not resign, I will have to be removed.' After his defeat in the presidential elections the following year he asked humbly for forgiveness and asserted his 'deep, sincere and irreversible desire to change' (quoted in Bratton, 1997: 2).

In Côte d'Ivoire, severely affected by the drop in the international price of cocoa and coffee, violent unrest between March and May 1990 threatened the government's austerity programme designed to fill a £236 million gap in the budget (agreed the previous July with the World Bank and the IMF) and shook the regime. Protests and strikes by workers in all sectors delayed the imposition of measures to cut public sector salaries and increase taxes, while student protests added fuel to the flames. Houphouët-

Boigny, the president of Côte d'Ivoire, brought in the army to control the protests and the president rejected growing demands for a multi-party state. Pay cuts and higher taxes were imposed, together with some price cuts aimed at softening the blow of the salary reductions. But protests continued, and businesses resisted the proposed reductions in prices. On March 23, soldiers used tear gas to disperse more than 1,000 people protesting in the centre of Abidjan bringing traffic to a halt (Mundt, 1997: 191-199). Doctors voted for an indefinite strike and withdrew emergency cover in protest at mass arrests of demonstrators. A ban on demonstrations, imposed on March 26, proved ineffective and in April the austerity measures were suspended after public protest and political pressure (from France as well as from within) forced a review of government policy. In May, lower ranks in the army started a series of demonstrations, culminating in their taking temporary control of the main airport, in support of their demands for better pay and conditions (Seddon, 2002).

Students were vital elements in both of these cases. But student protests in the 1990s in Africa took place in a profoundly altered world, without an 'alternative' to capitalism and facing a further onslaught from structural adjustment. The deployment of a discourse of 'democracy' and 'good governance' by the international lending agencies and the major capitalist states – despite their willingness in previous decades to support and even promote dictators and autocrats – coincided with what undoubtedly was also a movement inside Africa for 'democracy' and legitimate governments (Abrahamsen, 2000).

The outcome of these political movements has not always been a strengthening of the formal structures of democracy, but they have almost always been associated with a broadening and deepening of popular involvement in the political process. Even some of the more hesitant writers acknowledged the extent and significance of these movements. Saul and Leys (1999: 25), who wrote despairingly of 'the tragedy of Africa', recognise that, in addition to the 'thousands of activists groups' that constitute a vibrant civil society in Africa today, "there are also resistances directed more broadly and self-consciously against the kind of parasitic governments that attempt to ride the African crisis to their own advantage." There is some consensus that the second part of the decade saw a deepening and widening of democracy, if not within the formal institutions of party politics, then in the informal arenas of urban politics, in the slums

and shanty towns, in the workplace, in the schools and colleges, and in the public spaces and streets of the major cities. Despite the evidence that more than a decade of popular protest had itself created new space for democratisation, it was still possible for analysts like Saul and Leys (1999: 26) to ask “to what extent might this climate of democratization also open up space for popular initiatives that could prove more transformative?”

Although Saul has become far less sceptical about the significance of these waves of popular protest and political opposition (e.g. Saul, 2003), he still continues to highlight some of the undoubted weaknesses of these movements. While accepting that the waves of protest prised open space for civil society to operate, he sees the developments as benefiting essentially the middle classes – and the neo-liberal agenda – rather than popular interests. Saul claims that the best outcomes can be seen as empowering liberal democracy rather than genuine popular democracy. Together with Leys he was disparaging of the democratic transition; suggesting that, in most cases, it has done “little more than ... stabilise property-threatening situations by a momentary re-circulation of elites” (Leys and Saul, 1999: 26).

To a certain extent this has been the case, and the ‘multi-party’ democracies that have often been established as a result of these ‘transitions’ are enfeebled by the very processes that helped trigger the ‘transitions’ in the first place. Abrahamsen is surely right when she identifies the liberalisation of African economies as a crucial constraint on the strengthening of democracy, rather than as a pre-requisite for it:

[A]lthough external pressure may have secured the survival of certain structures and procedures of democracy in Africa, the demand for economic liberalisation has at the same time impeded the consolidation of democracy. Instead of consolidation, the result has been a fragile democracy, often little more than a facade, and this seems an almost inevitable outcome of the pursuit of simultaneous economic and political liberalisation in conditions of poverty and underdevelopment (Abrahamsen, 2000:135-6).

But this analysis is still somewhat blinkered; the economic liberalisation she describes has had a far more ambiguous effect. While it has weakened the ability of the states now being urged to democratise, to control the direction and character of political movements, it has also directly generated the resistance that has given rise to many of

the democratic transitions. Among activists it creates what many have criticised as bread and butter unionism (among students and trade unionists) – what in Senegal was dismissively described as *syndicalisme alimentaire* (economism) (*Lux* June-July 2003) – but which has the capacity to extend well beyond such immediate issues and take up broader matters of political significance. This period as we have seen, from the collapse of the Berlin Wall, can be regarded as marking the second wave of protests with more explicitly political aims and objectives than during the previous decades. Chapter 4 looks at the period of student mobilisation during the democratic transitions, and examines how their activism was transformed by the newly adjusted world.

This chapter has described the broad canvas of political and economic change (the world directly encountered) and the historical evolution of student activism. The nature of student action has been explored using a range of literature that emerged during the student revolts of the 1960s. The student activists we encounter later on in the thesis had to negotiate a world transformed by political and economic forces (and contested in waves of popular protest), that were discussed in the last sections of this chapter. We have seen that in the specific circumstances that pertained in sub-Saharan Africa the student-intelligentsia had a special capacity to exercise political agency. Changes that occurred from the 1970s – the raw materials of the democratic transitions – brought together broad popular coalitions (that reflected the hybridity of a world liberalised by structural adjustment) which empowered the waves of protests that became more organised and wide-ranging throughout the 1980s and 1990s. As we will see, students were a key element in initiating and organising these movements. The extent to which a new (third) wave of protest in sub-Saharan Africa can be identified, and connected to the growth of the anti-globalisation movement, will be examined in chapter 8.

Chapter 4

Contemporary student activism: structural adjustment and the 'democratic transition'

4:1 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, university students in the period following independence were a transitory social group, who held well-founded expectations of rewarding and high status employment after graduation. The 1970s began to erode many of these assurances as countries that had attempted to implement state-led development faced international recession and internal corruption and decay. State funding of higher education by the late 1970s was being targeted for restructuring. Student activism was affected: while students clung onto a self-conscious elitism, the reality of student poverty and the financial crises of African universities transformed their activism (Bathily *et al*, 1995). These processes, however, were inherently contradictory. As well as seeing their status as a privileged group collapse, there was an unprecedented 'convergence of forces' (Kagoro, interview 23 June 2003) between students and the popular classes (Seddon, 2002). The ivory tower had been turned inside out by the austerity imposed by structural adjustment and national governments. This convergence was expressed in the waves of resistance from the mid-1970s and later the 'democratic transitions' that swept the continent in the 1980s and 1990s. It was these transitions in Senegal and Zimbabwe that are the subject of the following chapters.

This chapter surveys the role of students, the nature of their protest and their relationship with civil society in the processes that brought about a wave of multi-party elections and democratic struggles in sub-Saharan Africa. The chapter focuses specifically on the literature that relates to student activism and protest, although it is acknowledged that this activism brings into play many other factors. The context in which students become political actors in contemporary Africa is tied to transformation of higher education in sub-Saharan Africa, often under the auspices of the IMF and World Bank led reform. These wider macro processes impinge on the ability of students to exercise effective and meaningful political agency.

The first section of the chapter situates university students in a recent literature on their activism. The following two sections explore the changing nature of higher education in the political economy of sub-Saharan Africa, focusing on the changed circumstances that student activists have been forced to negotiate in the last twenty-five years. These circumstances include political and geographical changes, which have followed the evolution of the post-colonial university. These geographical concerns are taken up in the chapter. The final sections of the chapter discuss both the evolution of student activism, the way it has been characterised in the recent literature and the involvement of students in the ‘convergence of forces’ that was typical of the democratic transitions. The chapter intentionally presents the broad political and economic changes to higher education in sub-Saharan Africa, and details the role of students in the actual transitions that took place in the 1990s. The history of these transitions must be, in Thompson’s word, “embodied ... in a real context” (Thompson, 1991: 8). This context is vital for the thesis since it was against this background that students in Zimbabwe and Senegal exercised political agency from 1995.

4:2 Situating students in the ‘transition’

In the waves of democratic struggle that gripped Africa in the late 1980s and 1990s students played a central role (Alidou *et al*, 2000). They were key elements in precipitating the confrontation with state authority, protesting against IMF and World Bank policies, student hardship, the loss of jobs in the ‘formal’ sector and a range of issues that appeared neither corporatist nor narrowly student-based (Frederici, 2000; Diop, 1993). In the process of resisting, protesting and demonstrating over a concentrated period of time they managed to coalesce around them, or become incorporated into wider political movements that sought to challenge the entire legitimacy of ruling parties, ageing gerontocracies and failing governments.

Students, as political actors in this period, have not received the attention they deserve.³⁶ Many authors have lamented the lack of serious consideration of the role of students and youth in the processes of transition in recent years (Builtenhuijs and

³⁶ At the conference on ‘youth’ in Africa held at the Centre of African Studies at the University of Edinburgh in May 2001, there were no papers on students or ‘youth’ as political actors.

Rijnierse, 1993; Buijtenhuijs and Thiriot, 1995). Indeed one author (Frederici, 2000) has noted that there has been little serious research on the topic. He observes that between 1987 and 2000 the *Journal of Modern African Studies* published only one article on African students while the *African Studies Review* between 1991 and 1996 confronted the subject only twice.³⁷ Given that students were leading elements of the democratic struggles in Africa, their absence in the research of the period is astonishing, “there is a striking lack of studies on the role of students in the ‘democratic transition’” (Konings, 2002:180). Although recently there have been several important studies on the role of students in the ‘democratic transition’ (Frederici *et al*, 2000; Boren, 2001; Nyamnjoh and Jua, 2002; Bianchini, 2004).

There is more consideration of the question of ‘youth’ in general (Ansell, 2005) typically however the research tends to see ‘youth’ from the perspective of victimhood and powerlessness, where youth are unable to devise strategies or patterns of resistance that can confront their crisis (Cruise O’Brien, 1997). Yet the category has to be broken down into its multiple parts. Harrison (2002) has identified four: urban unemployed, university students, employees and peasants. While it is recognised that there are no neat divisions of ‘youth’ in political mobilisation in Africa - indeed this research will stress the fluidity of student identity and political activism - it is important to focus on one vital and relatively under-researched subset of youth: university students.

Perhaps it is worth making it clear what the chapter (and the thesis) is not. The issues related to the research are broad. Indeed Nyamnjoh and Jua (2002: 7) note the breadth of the areas associated with the university and the ‘African intelligentsia’:

the legacies of colonial higher education policies; African universities and the state; African universities, market forces, and the commodification of knowledge; African universities and new technologies; repressive dynamics within student cultures; and the class tension in African universities between knowledge elites and the rest of the national population, among others.

In focusing on student activists an attempt is made to examine the contradictory nature of student protest in the *recent experiences* of democratic transition and political protest.

³⁷ Since then the *African Studies Review* has devoted an issue of the journal (2002) to the crisis of the African university and student revolt.

Both in this chapter and in the literature generally there is no assertion that students play one, uncomplicated, role in civil society, that they are a vanguard promising democracy and political transformation for an unpoliticised population. Students were often led and often 'leaders' of the wave of political protest in Africa, but they were also (as the experience of Zimbabwe and Cameroon demonstrates) 'reactionary' and politically conservative. Nonetheless their prominent role in these transitions demands serious attention. Nyamnjoh and Jua (2002: 4) note:

their very seductiveness to reactionary and revolutionary forces alike [ensure that students] and the universities have the potential to wield the double-edged sword. It is therefore not surprising that in Africa both the state and civil society have tended to appropriate universities in the quest for justifications of their competing versions of social projects.

Students and their activism – the exclusive subject of this research - are vital because of the role played in multiple struggles in sub-Saharan Africa “including the current democratisation process, [and] could serve as a barometer for state commitment to institutional change, on the one hand, and resistance to state repression or manipulation on the other” (Nyamnjoh and Jua 2002: 5).

4:3 Universities in crisis

Universities have also been analysed as a site of contestation where the democratisation process took place, incorporating a range of political forces and agency (Akam and Ducasse, 2002). The literature, however, does find unanimity in the description of the university as a neglected institution, a crumbling edifice housing impoverished students and lecturers. “Miserable salaries and material hardship have contributed to the university becoming part of the post-colonial ‘phallocracy’ where pride in possessing an active penis has to be dramatised by male academics seeking “the unconditional subordination of women to the principle of male pleasure” (Nyamnjoh and Jua, 2002: 5). The physical decay of higher education is a feature common in many sub-Saharan African universities (see figure 4:1 below).

Figure 4:1

Femi Aborisade (2002) – a Nigerian academic and trade unionist – describes the situation at institutions of higher education in Nigeria typical in much of the literature:

1. Inadequate infrastructural facilities

Classrooms are inadequate, both in terms of number and size considering increases in the number of students offered admission on a yearly basis. There is the trend of phenomenal growth in the number of students without corresponding preparation for the growth. The management and government are concerned with the size of income to be generated from the students in terms of ... fees and other types of levies. Physical clashes occasionally occur between students in different classes as lecture timetables are often not observed - students scramble to outpace fellow students, in being the first to occupy classrooms.

2. Staffing Situation

Higher education is grossly understaffed in many states. In the Department of Business and Public Administration where I was teaching, for example, there were just eleven academic staff teaching 1109 students as at December 1999.

3. Libraries

Libraries are inadequate, in terms of size, number of books and the age of the books. Current literatures are hardly available. Yet, many students are too poor to buy books of their own. Thus the lack of reading materials tends to further strengthen the development of cultism among students and lecturers.

4. Payment of Salaries

Salaries are never paid as and when due. Unfortunately, this situation encourages lecturers to unlawfully seek to pass the burden of their domestic problems on students through imposition of all sorts of levies, inducements and threats of failure. A common example is the practice whereby lecturers make it compulsory for students to buy photocopied lecture notes, etc.

5. Water, electricity and other conveniences

Supply of electricity is erratic. Evening lectures stop whenever electricity supply is arbitrarily cut off. There is no regular supply of water. This affects conveniences such as toilets – they are usually locked up. Lecturers and students have to make use of nearby bush

6. Under funding

A major cause of the hostile environment under which the academic staff works is traceable largely to under-funding of education. There is the problem of under-funding not because Nigeria is poor but because higher education has been de-prioritised. As the student population increases, funding (for both recurrent and capital expenditure) declines! (Interview, 24 September 2002).

It is important not to generalise uncritically from Aborisade's observations, although much of the literature tends to corroborate his observations (Lebeau, 1997; Caffentzis, 2000). In Malawi, Kerr and Mapanje (2002: 90) note that the physical collapse of the University of Malawi, the non-payment of staff and declining facilities for students have helped to create an "atmosphere of marginalisation" that has often led "students to anti-social behaviour." They describe the increase in sexual assaults on female students and lecturers from 1994 as a "cowardly attempt among male students to find an easy scapegoat for a much broader set of frustrations." Nkongolo (2000) describes a similar 'set of frustrations' among students at the University of Lubumbashi in the early 1990s. Nkongolo (2000: 96-98) describes how students were humiliated:

Us, students and tomorrow's elite of Zaire, the youth of the *Mouvement Populaire de la Révolution* (JMPR) were compelled to go to the toilet in the bush, like animals. We went there every day, in the hot and rainy season. The night like the day ... even the 'largest library in central Africa' was not saved, and was used as a WC ... The outside world must know the extent that Mobutu had humiliated us.

It is clear that there is a remarkable symmetry in the decay of sub-Saharan African universities over the last twenty years: countries thousands of miles apart experienced the same 'erosion' of higher education. Piet Konings (2002: 181) writes about the crisis of the University of Yaounde in Cameroon in the 1990s:

first and foremost, there was growing dissatisfaction with deepening crisis within the university and the lack of employment prospects for university graduates. Mockingly, students referred to their university as ‘the bachelors’ cemetery’.

Konings goes on to describe how student numbers have swelled from 10,000 in 1982 to more than 42,000 ten years later, even though the university infrastructure was only built to cope with a maximum of 7,000 students. Consequently:

lecture rooms, libraries, laboratories, and office space for lecturers were inadequate and lacked necessary equipment. The university hostel could offer accommodation to a limited number of students, often on the basis of patronage or ethnic criteria, and the vast majority of students were compelled to look for accommodation themselves (Konings, 2002: 181).

Even in Makerere University, regarded as a model for the rest of Africa, half of students questioned in a survey failed to make lectures because there were not enough seats (quoted in Musisi and Muwanga, 2003: 43). Alternative, private accommodation was invariably in overpriced ‘mini-cities’ surrounding the university.

The same pattern of decay affected Kenya’s university system. Although Maurice Amutabi (2002) tends to romanticise student activism,³⁸ his descriptions of conditions in Kenya’s universities is convincing:

The lecture theatres and libraries are not only congested but also run down. The hostels have become overcrowded, sanitary conditions have worsened, and food quality has deteriorated. University buildings are dilapidated, making the university conditions not different from any slum or poor neighbourhood in Kenya (Amutabi, 2002: 163).

Amutabi argues that the resulting impoverishment of student life has radically altered their position in Kenyan society, they are now, he maintains, ‘bedfellows’ with the population as a whole. They share the same economic crisis and live the same poverty. Students, though, still have a role as ‘societal watchdogs’ and only their vigilance will ensure that the gains of multi-partyism and democratisation are maintained.

³⁸ Amutabi argues that the student movement managed, almost uniquely, to hold aloft the banner of democratisation.

The conditions of higher education in Africa seen from the perspective of the university's physical infrastructure and the pauperisation of staff and students has declined steeply in the 1980s (Zeilig and Seddon, 2002). A number of writers point to the effects of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) that have greatly exacerbated the withdrawal of state funding for universities, teaching staff and students (Konings, 2002; Frederic *et al*, 2000). They argue that these policies deprioritise higher education in Africa, compelling national governments to slash state support to university budgets and insisting on the introduction of tuition fees and 'levies' on students.

4:4 Reform of higher education in sub-Saharan African

From the early 1980s to the early 1990s the World Bank produced a number of important studies stressing the importance of higher education reform. These studies advocate the dramatic reduction of higher education expenditure in Africa. The most important of these reports, which became known as the Berg Report, *Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*, was produced in 1981. It focused on the general priorities for African development and prescribed policy reforms to unregulate national states. These reforms included the wholesale reconfiguration of university education in Africa. The report has become the subject of considerable and mostly hostile discussion (Sandbrook, 1993; Diouf and Mamdani, 1994). The report (1981) determined the approach of donor agencies to education in Africa. The problem was simple: too much money was being spent on education:

Expenditure on schooling already claims a large part of GDP - around 4% in two thirds of the countries for which data are available. And, more important, they claim a sizeable share of public expenditure - about 16% of the total, on average, more than any other government function except general administration. In a significant number of African countries, recurrent expenditure on education is between 25 and 35% of total recurrent spending. In the 1970s, when government revenues rose rapidly in most of the continent, the average African country's incremental share going to education was 13% - again larger than any other single item except general administration (World Bank, 1981: 81-82).

The report recommended fundamental reforms that centred on 'cost-analysis', which pitted the economic returns of primary education against those of the tertiary sector. The report explained the calculation:

Given Africa's extreme shortage of fiscal resources and the many claims on revenue, all educational strategies must have a key objective of greater efficiency in resource use. African education is expensive not only in the sense that it absorbs a significant share of public sector resources; it is expensive also in terms of average cost per pupil, especially at the higher level. African governments spend as much per university student as countries with per capita incomes at least three times and as much as eight times higher. By contrast primary education is cheap in comparison with industrialised countries. Primary education cost per student year as a per cent of per capita GNP in Africa are about as much as in other developing areas; secondary education costs are 4 to 5 times as much and higher education costs 5 to 10 times as much (World Bank, 1981: 82).

While the report provided the blueprint for higher education reform in the 1980s, it was criticised by a World Bank (WB) report in 1989. On education the WB report recognised that tight budgets in 1980s had led to a decline in primary to post-secondary education. Indeed education had been the focus of an important report the previous year, *Education in Sub-Saharan Africa* (World Bank, 1988). By the end of the decade it was obvious to the World Bank – if also contradictory – that there was a need to improve 'human resources'. The 1989 report even stated that donors should fund capital expenditure in tertiary education (Sandbrook, 1993: 83-4). The effect of years of reform was clear: the rapid decline in salaries and the deterioration of higher education had led to shortfalls in doctors, managers, accountants and economists. The crisis even forced Babangida, the military ruler in Nigeria, to set up the *Presidential Task Force on the Brain Drain* in 1988. As Sandbrook (1993: 43) argued:

A widespread decline in the quality of secondary and university education in the 1980s aggravated the problem of finding qualified staff. Economic crisis and budget cutbacks have deprived educational institutions of the resources they require.

Even so the reforms did not go far enough for some. At the 1986 Conference of African Vice-Chancellors in Harare, the World Bank questioned the very existence of universities in Africa (Iman and Mama, 1994: 73). Another conference two-years later described the bleak state of higher education, ravaged by structural adjustment. The conference - *Human Dimensions of Africa's Economic Recovery and Development* - noted that far from structural adjustment increasing the rate of primary school enrolment, the opposite was the case as all sectors of education had suffered:

Primary school enrolment declined by 65% between 1980-5. Secondary school enrolment during the same period dropped from 13.7% to 10.9%. And in higher education, the annual enrolment declined by 66% between 1980-5

The drastic growth in brain drain involving middle and high-level manpower is another disturbing trend. A joint ECA/ILO report estimated that, in six months to 1987, 70,000 Africans left the continent, up from 40,000 in 1985. This represents approximately 30% of Africa's skilled human resources. While the lucky ones flee to Europe, those less fortunate take up jobs as teachers and doctors in some of South Africa's homelands (quoted in Bako, 1994: 152).

The argument that runs through the reports is that the 'reprioritisation' of education will ensure that African countries see a more equal distribution of resources across the education sector. Critics of the reforms that followed these reports cite the fact that after five years of SAPs, social spending in sub-Saharan African countries had declined by 26 percent (between the years 1980 to 1986). Governments already facing financial crisis were pressurised to cut subsidies to secondary and tertiary level students. The World Bank responded by claiming that they intended to reorganise funding on education because for too long governments had regarded universities as 'sacred cows', when in reality they were bloated, overfunded and inefficient (Caffentzis, 2000).

A report carried out by the academic Kelly (1991) for the World Bank sought to describe the nature of postcolonial education typical of Africa. Zambia had suffered a severe economic crisis in 1977 with the collapsing price of copper, the country's leading export. The fall in copper prices meant that by 1977 Zambia, which depended on copper for half of its GDP, received no income from its most important resource (Marfleet, 1998:104). Despite the crisis the government continued to increase funding in higher education to the detriment of primary and secondary schools (Akam and Ducasse, 2002). This led Kelly (1991: 61) to argue that "too much was devoted to the refined needs of too few at the higher level, and too little to the general needs of too many at the lower level." In addition the report concluded that higher education was inefficient, citing the 'tradition' of not charging fees.

The World Bank argued that, unlike higher education, the primary sector had a higher return on investment, 28% against 13% for tertiary education. As Caffentzis (2000: 5) explains, "In other words university graduates received about two and half times more income over outlay than the government; and they received from the government thirty

times more than what primary students received.” Reports pointed out that while the ‘white collar sector’ comprised 6% of the population they received in state revenue more than 27% of the education budget (Caffentzis, 2000: 5). The World Bank maintained that the thrust of their policies was to ensure a more egalitarian allocation of funding: by reallocating funds from ‘urban elites’ an educational egalitarianism could be achieved.

In Senegal despite almost two decades of structural adjustment, and a concerted effort in the 1990s from the World Bank and IMF to force the government to reduce the enrolment of students into higher education, enrolment had increased (some estimate that there are now more than 30,000 students at Cheikh Anta Diop Université in Dakar, UCAD). The higher education sector by 2001 was still absorbing roughly 27% of national education budget, whereas primary education received 38.4% of the budget (Niang, 2004: 67). The point of highlighting these figures is not to argue in favour of World Bank and IMF reform but to explain how unsuccessful their policies have been. As discussed in chapter 6 the reason why the government – despite their best efforts – has been unable to carry out the agreed policy was the level of student (and lecturer) activism.

There is considerable controversy over the number of university students in sub-Saharan Africa. According to one important study (Caffentzis, 2000: 9) there are fewer than 500,000 students in higher education in the whole of Africa. Considering that there is a continental population of about 500 million, that makes roughly one student per 1000 people. This figure is unreliable. Mama (2005: 98) states that, “Gross enrolment in African universities increased dramatically ... to over 1.75 million in 1995 and are still growing fast in most places.” Caffentzis states that in 1986 the enrolment rates for higher education were about 2% of the pertinent age group; this had reached 3% by 1995 (Higher Education in Developing Countries, World Bank, 2000: 107). This means that Africa has among the lowest enrolment rates in the world, much less than Latin America’s 12%, and 7% for the developing world as a whole. However, there are no reliable figures for sub-Saharan Africa, and Mama’s enrolment numbers are contested by Altbach and Teferra (2003). This is largely due to the fact that under the impact of World Bank and IMF reforms in the 1980s cash-strapped universities stopped producing their own statistics. But at the same time these organisations demanded figures on

student enrolment in order to assess the progress of reforms. Often institutions were left to 'create' numbers that had previously been collated by the university administration (Lebeau, 1997). Enrolment rates can be seen from Tables 4:1 and 4:2.

However various reports disguise the huge discrepancies within the third world so that the enrolment rates for Africa are lost in the figure for the third world as a whole (see Table 4:1). This has the effect of disguising the stagnant and in some cases falling enrolment figures for Africa. Table 4.2 clarifies the situation on the continent.

Table 4:1 The evolution of enrolment rates 1980-1995

<u>Count</u>	<u>Least Dev.</u>	<u>Less Dev.</u>	<u>World Total</u>	<u>Dev.</u>
1980	2%	4%	11%	36%
1985	2%	4%	12%	38%
1990	2%	6%	13%	48%
1995	3%	6%	15%	62%

Source: World Bank, 2000

However there are wide differences within sub-Saharan Africa. The university system varies widely across the region as the following examples illustrate. The two public universities in Zaire had a combined enrolment of approximately 2,000 students in 1960 at the time of the country's independence (World Bank, 2000). Five years after independence the gross enrolment rate in the country was still bouncing around Zero, at the same time the figure for Latin America was about 4% (see Table 4.2). By 1995 enrolment on a single courses offered at the university could exceed the entire number of students at the university thirty years previously. The World Bank reports that in the academic year 1995 to 1996 "nearly 2,500 freshmen packed a single class in biomedical sciences" (World Bank, 2000:18).

Table 4:2 Gross Enrolment Rates

	<u>Secondary</u>		<u>Tertiary</u>			
	1965	1995	1965	1975	1985	1995
Low/middle income	21	55	4	7	7	10
Sub-Saharan Africa	5	25	1	1	2	3
East Asia/Pacific	23	64	5	5	4	7
South Asia	24	44	4	7	8	6
Europe/Central Asia	39	83	9	14	13	32
Latin America and Caribbean	19	55	4	13	16	18
Middle East and N. Africa	20	62	3	7	11	15

Source: World Bank, 2000

Makerere University is an example of higher education in Africa celebrated by the World Bank. According to research (Musisi and Nansozi, 2003), the university managed to extricate itself from a crisis in the early 1990s, returning to its former pre-eminence as one of the foremost universities in East Africa. The Bank highlights how the university has managed to increase enrolment rates and the number of students paying fees: almost 70% of the student population were contributing towards their fees by the end of the 1990s. Where previously the university was funded completely by the national government, today 30% of revenue is raised 'internally' (World Bank, 2000: 54-5). The World Bank (2000: 55) emphasises the case of Makerere to stress the importance of 'releasing' universities from state funding and control in Africa, "The Makerere accomplishment has lessons for other universities in Africa that face similar

resource constraints. It shows that expansion - and the maintenance of quality - can be achieved simultaneously in a context of reduced state funding. It puts to rest the notion that the state must be the sole provider of higher education in Africa.”

A series of academic studies have recently been published to emphasise these points. They stress that higher education in Africa only has a future in emulating the liberalisation of several key African universities.³⁹ As the preface to the series describes:

Much of sub-Saharan Africa has suffered deep stagnation over the last two decades and is staggering under the weight of domestic and international conflict, disease, poverty, corruption and natural disaster. Its universities - once the shining lights of intellectual excitement and promise - suffered from enormous decline in the government resources for education. In the last half of the last decade however this began to change in a number of countries ... Our interest was captured by the renewal and resurgence that we saw in several African nations and at their universities bought about by stabilisation, democratisation, decentralisation and economic liberalisation (Musisi and Muwanga, 2003).

What is remarkable about this quotation is the absence of concern for the role of external factors in the sub-continent's decline. Indeed, the case studies that make up the series are highly contradictory.⁴⁰

The World Bank envisaged the total transformation of the university system in Africa, from the reforms aimed at creating ‘centres of excellence’ for a smaller number of students of ‘high quality’. For many students who would have previously gravitated towards higher education, a system of ‘on-the-job’ training was envisaged that would be provided by the private sector and subsidised by the government, where ‘worker-students’ would receive training for lower wages. In primary and secondary education, schools would be run by local communities, religious institutions and private companies who would pay for the cost of teaching staff and the upkeep of buildings (Caffentzis, 2000). In Senegal, Dakar has returned to being the educational focal point for the sub-region, with students making the same pilgrimages made in the pre-independence

³⁹ Five countries were nominated as case studies, all apparently showing positive signs of such liberalisation. These countries were: Uganda, Ghana, South Africa, Tanzania and Mozambique.

⁴⁰ How the experience of Makerere University in Uganda demonstrates the benefits of ‘democratisation’ in higher education in a country that has specifically outlawed ‘democratisation’ is never explained.

period but to a pedagogical world almost entirely privatised. The city has been turned into a training centre; according to a recent pamphlet advertising *Enseignement supérieur* there are now eighty public and private establishments (sixty five of these are private, and fifteen public) almost all based in the capital Dakar and offering an array of internationally recognised degrees, certificates and diplomas. Most of these schools, colleges and universities are private, and the majority of their students come from elsewhere in West Africa. The massive expansion in private colleges is connected to the liberalisation of higher education in Senegal since 1994 (*Etudier au Sénégal*, 2003: 4).

Many of the premises that form the backbone of these proposals appear to make sense. Certainly it cannot be objected that 'primary education' in the context of small national budgets should be a national educational priority or that higher education should also aim for 'high quality'. Shrinking resources affect most sub-Saharan African countries and require a realistic approach to the policy of educational provision. Some commentators have argued that World Bank reforms and the re-shifting of provision to primary education are the only serious and viable options for African economies (e.g. Verspoor, 2001).

One of the central questions in considering these arguments is the effect of SAPs on social policy and economic development in Africa. Many write how SAPs have deepened the crisis that has afflicted sub-Saharan society (Bond, 2002; Seddon and Dwyer, 2002). The reality of life for students and lecturers in much of the continent could not contrast more to the image of higher education as 'spoilt' and 'over bloated' that the WB presents (see chapter 4). Higher education in Africa does not thrive, but in many places faces a battle for survival. If the objective is to 'stream-line' higher education then the question that demands answering is: where from? Africa has the lowest enrolment rates in higher education of any region in the world; further restrictions would restrict access to higher education to an almost imperceptible minority of privileged and 'elite' students.⁴¹

⁴¹ However the great majority of privileged students are not sent, and will not be sent, to improved and more selective national universities. On the contrary the trend is to educate the children of a wealthy elite in the United States (the country of preference for everyone), France (particularly for students from Senegal) and the UK. In Zimbabwe, South Africa is a closer and far cheaper option, with a large number of relatively well-funded universities. This suggests that South Africa is at variance with some of the arguments made in the thesis.

This has led one writer to comment: “any policy that lowers enrolment rates - hovering now near zero - can be seen as a policy of academic exterminism” (Caffentzis, 2002: 9). There is also a further dimension to the debate. The WB is correct to maintain that there is ‘excessive demand’ for higher education in Africa. The university system is seen by youth as a crucial entry point to a world of greater opportunity, and a way to escape poverty. The effect of the crisis that has gripped many African economies is to leave ‘youth’ without the prospect of work. Politicised youth, or the ‘youth factor’ (Richards 1996; 2002), has fuelled conflict in Africa; where youth have been recruited to movements of social breakdown in Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Senegal and Zimbabwe. ‘Youth’ in this context has not, as Richards argued, supplanted ‘ethnicity’, but has often been combined with it turning secessionist and political conflicts in Africa into ‘ethnic-youth’ movements (this argument is explored in the chapter 8). The tendency to deprioritise higher education in the Third World has been an important contributing factor to these conflicts (Krueger and Maleckova, 2002).

If the WB advocates a system of loans and fees - introduced almost without exception across Africa - then there needs to be a pool of students who are able to take up and pay the loans. This is contingent on two factors, real wages that can sustain a system of loans and fees, and employment for students after graduation to ensure the repayment of these loans (White House, 2002). There is an additional problem connected to the relationship between primary and tertiary education. If the WB is motivated by a desire to expand primary education then by necessity it requires a complementary expansion of teaching graduates from universities. Caffentzis (2002: 11) argues that the yearly influx from tertiary education must increase by 10% a year then an enrolment growth rate of 1% can not keep up with the stated demands of expanding primary education and the WB is “subverting its own alleged objective: the expansion and improvement of primary education.”

The centrepiece of WB reform for higher education in Africa (and the third world) was the ‘economic’ return on education provision. In resource strapped economies limited funds must not be diverted to the low returns of higher education but must reemphasise the primary and secondary sectors where there are higher real returns on the money invested from state budgets. Bloom (2001) has criticised the pattern of reforms:

Take someone who has no education, someone who has been to primary school, someone who has completed secondary school, and someone with a degree. How much more does each earn than the previous? This differential is then compared to the amount invested in their education to find the return. The results suggest that higher education yields a lower return than primary or secondary education - and has been used to justify the skewing of government budgets (and developments funds) away from higher education institutions.

This approach has the effect of reducing education to a zero-sum game that places primary education in a competitive struggle with higher and university education. Rather, as Bloom argues, education is a 'positive sum game'.⁴² The report of the *Higher Education and Developing Countries: Peril and Promise* (2000), funded by the WB includes an important criticism of the approach previously taken by the Bank:

Since the 1980s, many national governments and international donors have assigned higher education a relatively low priority. Narrow - and, in our view, misleading - economic analysis has contributed to the view that public investment in universities and colleges brings meagre returns compared to investment in primary and secondary schools, and that higher education magnifies income inequality (World Bank, 2000: 10)

The report notes that although 85 percent of the world's population live in the third world less than half of the world's 80 million students in higher education are from these parts of the world. The report stresses the problems for students in the third world:

they are taught by poorly-qualified, poorly-motivated and (no surprise) poorly-compensated faculty, struggling with inadequate facilities and outmoded curricula. The secondary education system has often failed to prepare these students adequately for advanced study - and, once on campus, political activism, violence, cheating, corruption and discrimination can undermine their progress (Bloom, 2001).

These are not reasons to undermine higher education but, on the contrary, "We have educated more and more young people to primary and secondary level – but, like Oliver Twist, they want more! They realize something that even the richest governments are only beginning to wake up to: in today's world, higher education is basic education. Education that is needed by the masses – and can no longer be confined to a tiny elite" (Bloom, 2001). In the report the university sector is regarded as a system to both

⁴² This implies that there cannot be a simple economic trade off between primary and tertiary education, as they fulfil distinct roles in society. However for years this was exactly how the WB viewed education reform in Africa.

generate national elites, to respond to the ‘challenges’ of globalisation and “to promote prosperity among people with talent and motivation, irrespective of their social origins” (Bloom, 2001). However there are few signs that the WB or IMF have accepted these criticisms, or that after twenty years they can see the importance of higher education in Africa.⁴³

4:5 Changing places: the geography of the university 1960 to 2000

We can say that there is a specific geography of the colonial and post-colonial university that is intimately linked to the cycles of student protest and mobilisations, at once reflecting and determining the ebbs and flows of student action. The city is the vital background to these developments as the “crucial spaces for democracy because of the scope and roles of their governments in relation to particular geo-historical transformations. Key transformations in political institutions have often involved changes in the scale organisation of politics” (Low, 2004: 129). Equally the resistance of student activists has to be seen in the context of what Pile (1997) describes as the ‘spatial technologies of domination’ such as military occupation and urban planning, and the need of the state to “continually resolve specific spatial problems, such as distance and closeness, inclusion and exclusion, surveillance and position, movement and immobility...” (Pile 1997: 3). This section sketches briefly the shifting geography of universities in Senegal and Zimbabwe that can be divided roughly into four key stages: the colonial university; the universities that were built after independence; the privatisation of universities in the 1990s and what is today called the virtual university.

The first stage saw the construction of colonial universities across the continent in the 1940s and 1950s. They were designed explicitly as institutions – frequently training centres and teaching colleges – that would equip a generation of African students with the requisite skills for the colonial state. They provided either the first ‘years’ of study after which the student would progress to the colonial metropolis, or simply furnish the

⁴³ There are some counter-indications. The National Security Document of the United States (White House, 2002: 23) emphasised the importance of education in Africa: “Literacy and learning are the foundations of democracy and development. Only about 7 percent of World Bank resources are devoted to education. This proportion should grow. The United States will increase its own funding for education by at least 20% with an emphasis on improving basic education. The United States can also bring information technology to these societies, many of whose education systems have been devastated by HIV/AIDS.”

student with the required level of education for work within the colonial apparatus. There was an explicit physical aspect to these early universities and colleges. They were largely built in administrative capitals, close to the hub of colonial organisation in the small but growing conurbations. The ‘impunity’ derived from the level - at this stage – of the politicisation of university space. This does not mean that colonial universities and colleges were built without political considerations; the city was still an intensely politicised space and one that, as Low (2004: 129) writes, “held out hope...as places where better, more participatory, or at least more involving democratic practices might thrive.” If the university in Rhodesia was not an ‘oasis’ of calm in the 1950s (Gelfand, 1978) - dominated as it was by white students - it was also not the politicised arena of the late 1960s and 1970s.

Independence transformed the university space. It rapidly became - as we have seen - a battleground for a politically privileged group of student activists defining and redefining their ‘elitism’ (initially as allies and members of a state elite and subsequently as a political vanguard). The university in post-colonial Africa during the 1960s and 1970s became ‘hyper-politicised’, a rarefied space of political mobilisation and activism. However universities were still the same institutions built before independence and situated in capital cities (Senegal) or in the affluent suburbs of the city (Zimbabwe). They were often the only institution of higher education, and accordingly achieved a high level of state support and national prestige partly expressed by their location. In the student actions and mobilisations that characterised the late 1960s and 1970s, students benefited from their access to the city (Mills, 2004).

The effect of the evolution of student activism – the transformation of students from natural allies of the new states to their most vociferous critics – influenced the second stage of development of the post-colonial university. Now urban planners and politicians came together to redesign the university. New institutions relocated and the university space was redefined. There is no clearer example of this than the development of *Gaston Berger Université* in Senegal. Although the university was not opened until 1990 it was originally built in the 1970s. The inspiration for the new university came from a number of factors: firstly, the expanding number of students and the need for a second national university, and secondly an explicit desire to avoid the

problems that had shaken the University of Dakar after 1968, when the student and trade union revolt had almost unseated the regime (Sougou, interview, 13 March 2004).

The *Université de Dakar*, and particularly the most politically active faculties, the *Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines* and the *Faculté des Sciences Juridiques et Politiques* erupted repeatedly onto the political stage in the 1970s, disrupting the administrative spaces of the capital (Bathily, 1992). The new university was going to be built – under President Senghor’s orders – in Saint Louis. Saint Louis had been the previous capital of the *Afrique-Occidentale Française* (AOF), but by the late 1970s was a fairly insignificant city 180 miles from the capital. Even the second city Thies – situated little more than 50 miles from Dakar – the obvious choice for a second university was deemed too close to the capital. In addition the university was built ten miles from the city centre in an area that would isolate student unrest.⁴⁴ But Senghor’s idea was not limited to the spatial relocation of the university but also its internal organisation. The university was originally conceived as the new centre for the two faculties that were regarded as having created the political turbulence on the campus in Dakar. Students of literature, languages, humanities and law were going to be exiled to Saint Louis, and to a remote cul-de-sac miles away from that city: the explicit ostricisation of the unruly subject (Boren, 2001). In the end these ideas proved untenable. By the end of the first decade of its existence in 2000, the entire number of students was still only a fraction of those enrolled in a single department at the university in Dakar.

The political and economic transformations in Zimbabwe and Senegal after independence affected the socio-spatial organisation of their cities. Both countries saw both massive urbanisation and the political explosion of civil society that combined to transform the government’s relationship towards the urban population. But these political and economic changes were also “articulated through new social and spatial arrangements expressed in the expansion and transformation of urban form and the spatial clustering of the populations” (Marston and Mitchell, 2004: 111). The

⁴⁴ However student activists from the university say that they were still able to cause considerable disruption by closing down the main trunk road outside the campus, that is the only major route north (interviews, 2004).

politicisation of the student body in their traditional spaces helped to transform the regime's conceptions of their urban populations.

The third phase saw the crisis of state development, swelling numbers of students and the simultaneous collapse of state employment for new graduates. By the 1990s students were looking to private colleges, universities and 'centres de formation'. The new universities in the 1980s and 1990s were, by and large, private ones, built in collaboration with foreign colleges and universities and funded by students and private donations. The new universities insisted on a new type of student: affluent and depoliticised (motivated only by a desire to complete their studies and leave the country). These students were going to undertake a period of study at home before completing their degrees abroad. Suffolk University which opened in 2000, an affiliate of the same university in Boston, USA, offers two years of language study and undergraduate courses, after which students complete their degrees in the United States (*Sud Quotidien*, 2000p). The cost for a year at the university is US\$5,000 (Suffolk University, 2004). The private university resembles its counterpart in the west; no serious consideration needs to be taken about its location, as long as there is sufficient space for ample sporting and recreational facilities. Suffolk University is located ten minutes from the UCAD, resembles a private school. It over looks the sea, has immaculate manicured lawns and spotless buildings and sporting facilities. The student activists have disappeared and their 'activism' has been domesticised. Students involve themselves in campus-based activities devoid of any connection with national politics. The over-politicised spaces of the national state university are replaced by swaying palm trees, small but well-stocked libraries, excellent computer and internet access and American English. The student in the private university has become a parody of the student-intelligentsia of pre-independent Africa, but today they are pampered (and privileged) by private capital in an era of state decay.

The geography of the university in a period of state decline and collapse has led to a fourth phase in the lifecycle of the post-colonial university. The *Université Virtuelle d'Afrique* (UVA) is symbolic of the collapse of the state project of higher education (Mills, 2004). Promoted enthusiastically by Abdoulaye Wade, the UVA does not exist physically, and will involve students following internationally accredited courses through video links with French, British and American universities. The qualifications

that they receive at the end of the course will, according to Wade (March 2004), be exactly the same as their student counterparts in the West. However the new ‘virtual’ student will not have to leave the country, making foreign study and travel completely unnecessary.⁴⁵ There is a danger of exaggerating these trends and there will be a limit to the courses that can be provided. For example, it is unlikely that a student could follow a five-year medicine degree without the physical presence of a laboratory, medical facilities and the infrastructure of a university. But these initiatives are illustrative of the crisis of the university system. Again the student activist vanishes into a virtual world of study where the students do not need to travel abroad or even attend courses (courses could be followed at the plethora of internet cafes). Students are spatially dispersed with little or no opportunity for collective identity let alone political activism. They enter a world of virtual of activism. In this world, the demands for government employment (and political change) are transformed into demands for greater access to an illusive globalisation. Wade’s UVA is the consummation of these illusions (Teferra and Altbach, 2003). Such projects also make African students consumers again of largely foreign knowledge, a process that might be described as the recolonisation of the mind (Ngugi, 1981).

4:6 New student movements or the descent into corporatism?

There is the danger of exceptionalising the experience of higher education in Africa, that the university system is uniquely affected by catastrophe and crisis. This is an important consideration when examining the state of student activism in higher education in Africa. The literature tends to emphasise the same ‘tragedy’, with students and youth seen as the quintessential ‘lost generation’ (Cruise O’Brien, 1996). Can we speak as Barkan (1975: 128-130) did 30 years ago of an ‘African pattern’ dividing the behaviour of African university students and European and American ones? The implication in this example was that students in the West were driven by higher political ideals. Federici (2000: 103) is unequivocal about the question: “we can speak today of an international student movement, and that African students are paying by far the heaviest cost for the effort this movement is making to reverse the corporate agenda by

⁴⁵ The idea of the UVA coincides with the increasingly draconian visa restrictions on students wishing to study abroad. Senegalese students are currently denied visas, for example, to study English in the UK because of the possibility of learning English at the British Council in Dakar or other language centres in the capital. The UVA will be a convenient way to deny thousands of students’ visas, as courses provided abroad become available *virtually* in Dakar. The rich man’s castle becomes impenetrable.

which education is being reshaped worldwide.”⁴⁶ The argument finds a parallel in Boren (2001) whose global survey of ‘student resistance’ makes a case for the same pan-student approach.

There is an important divide in the literature on student activism that has ramifications for the understanding of student politics not just in the current period but historically. One strand of opinion is propagated by the editorial board of the important American newsletter Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa (CAFA) and summarised in *A Thousand Flowers: Social struggles against structural adjustment in African universities* a collection of essays by the same authors of the newsletter. Their arguments are very persuasive: They state their objectives in the introduction to the collection:

Although the state is the immediate perpetrator, the ultimate responsibility for many violations of academic rights on the African campuses is borne by international financial institutions and more specifically, by the policy of ‘adjustment’ adopted by Washington and the European Union in the 1980s, that calls for the virtual recolonisation of Africa’s educational systems.

The attack on the universities is part of a broader attack on the place of Africa in the International Division of Labor, on the value of African workers, and on the capacity of Africans to achieve self-determination, the still unrealised goal of the anti-colonial struggle.

Defending the struggles of students and teachers in Africa is to defend the right of the African youth to study. This means the right to have equal access, with European and North American youth, and the youth of other countries across the world, to the knowledge and the wealth produced internationally, rather than being condemned to poverty and migration, the lot reserved for them in the plans of international financial institutions now ruling Africa’s political economy (Alidou *et al*, 2000: xiii).

They have provided a running critique of the policies of the WB and IMF in Africa from the point of view of popular protest and student resistance (CAFA, 1991; CAFA

⁴⁶ There are, of course, additional dangers of conflating the behaviour of African students with their European and American counterparts. It is hard to see any point in investigating African student movements if they are simply elements of an already existing international student movement as Frederici *et al* (2000) contend. To what extent do students - in Africa and Europe - regard themselves as part of such an ‘international movement’? Or are these categories imposed on essentially national ‘movements’? While it is possible to argue that they are linked to an international wave of resistance to structural adjustment (Walton and Seddon, 1994) and neo-liberalism, for this resistance to be part of a ‘movement’ - let alone an international one - surely these links have to be conscious and explicit among the students themselves?

1996). They maintain that in the escalation of student protest since the introduction of SAPs in Africa from the early 1980s there has emerged a new “pan-African student movement, continuous in its political aspirations with the student activism that developed in the context of the anti-colonial struggle, and yet more radical in its challenges to the established political power” (Federici, 2000: 88). The effects of SAPs have massively proletarianised the African student body, breaking them from their recent postcolonial past as members of the elite (Federici, 2000: 93).

The partial withdrawal of the state from higher education in Africa has altered the nature of elite formation at the university. Much of the literature confirms these arguments. Piet Koning (2002: 180-1) makes a similar point to CAFA in reference to the student rebellions in the late 1980s and early 1990s:

As a result of such state withdrawal, African universities no longer appeared to be serving as centres of elite formation ... Little wonder that they have been inclined to see corrupt and authoritarian regimes as responsible for their predicament and to perceive a ‘democratic transition’ as a necessary condition for change in society in general and in universities in particular.

Equally, Mamdani (1994) has seen a similar development as part of a process transforming the African class system, where the limited expansion of the African ‘middle classes’ after independence has been reversed as state directed initiatives receded from the 1970s onwards. The impact on higher education was clear:

the growth in a state-financed higher and secondary education sector, whose enrolment came less and less from affluent families, went alongside shrinking opportunities for middle class advancement in a crisis-prone economy (Mamdani, 1994: 258).

There has been a process of ‘institutional liberalisation’ that caused the explosions in student activism in recent years. The new *proletarianised* student population that has resisted the policies of SAPs and their application to higher education have created a qualitatively different form of student activism. This allows us to view the “present

phase of student activism not as a set of separate struggles but as one pan-African student movement” (Frederici, 2000: 96).⁴⁷

Some writers and activists argue that there was a ‘convergence of forces’ between previously privileged - now proletarianised - students and the urban poor. The case is put most forcefully by the former student leader at the University of Zimbabwe, Brian Kagoro (2003), referring to a period of activism in the mid 1990s:

so you now had students supporting their parents on their student stipends which were not enough, because their parents had been laid off work. So in a sense as poverty increases you have a *reconvergence of these forces*. And the critique started ... around issues of social economic justice, [the] right to a living wage ... students started couching their demands around a right to livelihood (interview 23 June, 2003).

Seddon (2002) raises many similar themes, defining these ‘new’ popular forces as including the urban and rural working classes broadly defined as well as other categories, including the so-called ‘lumpenproletariat’, day-labourers and the unemployed, workers in the informal sector, small (and sometimes medium) peasants, small retailers, craftsmen and artisans, petty commodity producers (see also Zeilig and Seddon, 2005). If we extend Kagoro’s argument we can say that the social expectations (and pauperisation) of students ‘converged’ with these ‘forces’ during the period of structural adjustment. As Harrison (2002: 114) has noted, “One can see the decline of corporatism and the increasing informalisation of the urban economy [as] ... the reformulation of ... political identities into a realm of fiscal austerity and speculation.” The ‘hybridization’ of these social forces bringing together exceedingly motley groups has altered the mobilisation and activism of students.

These arguments contrast with much of the literature: for example Bathily *et al* reverse the categorisation made by *CAFA* and *A Thousand Flowers*. It is necessary, they argue, to separate student activism from its perceived heyday in the 1960s and 1970s to the disintegration of the movement during the last twenty years. Today students are written

⁴⁷ However, it is important to caution against generalising about the proletarianised status of students. The picture varies across the continent. A survey of students at the national university in Maputo in Mozambique revealed the over-representation of Maputo students at universities and a correlation between prestigious degree courses and family status (Mario and Fry, 2003: 31). Mills (2004) suggests that the elite status of students in higher education in Mozambique is demonstrated at Eduardo Mondlane University in Maputo where 80 percent of students speak Portuguese as a first language.

off, “left with their daily corporatism and the inefficiency of their fights” (Bathily *et al*, 1995: 401). Yesterday they were harbingers of a brighter future: “If prior to World War II students tacitly accepted being petty bourgeois with colonial linkages, up to the mid-1970s they claimed a left vanguard status” (Bathily *et al*, 1995: 401). They make their argument by charting the evolution of student activism:

But at the end of the day, they only managed some vigils with hardly any support. They appeared at most as the enlightened conscience of their people on the path to complete emancipation and modernisation. They managed to shift from their role as supporters of the Western system ... to that of rejecting it totally... By the late 1970s ... students saw themselves [as]...political and economic failures (Bathily *et al*, 1995: 401).

The argument asserts that with the collapse of the post-colonial ‘social pact’ student engagement has become ‘corporatist’, daily ones, concerned only with issues of ‘bread and butter’. In the case of Senegal, “By the late 1970s Senegalese students saw themselves more modestly as symbols of the independent stalemate, of the political and economic failure of a regime which was unable to provide them with clear survival prospects.” Students, following this argument, have lost their status, “from providers of modernity they became aid applicants” (Bathily *et al*, 1995: 405). The respected scholar Cruise O’Brien makes a similar point about student protests in defence of their ‘elite status’: “And students will riot for their privileges too ... defending their ‘right’ to better scholarship” (Cruise O’Brien, 1996: 65).

While this literature tends to avoid the heroic discourse with students “counter-posing and confronting the abuses of state power” (Boyer, 2002: 210), it misses the ‘novelty’ in the wave of popular protest that has swept Africa in the last fifteen years. Far from understanding the “role of students in the ‘democratic transition’” (Konings, 2002: 180) as part of a generalised revolt, these arguments tend to dismiss the significance of student revolt. Frederici (2000: 101) sees “students struggle to defend education as ‘an inalienable right’ they are fighting not in defense of a privilege or a corporatist interest, but against it.” Students are, on the contrary, attempting to “reverse the corporate agenda by which education is being reshaped world-wide” (Frederici 2000: 103).

However there is a tendency in *CAFA* and *A Thousand Flowers* to downplay the ambiguity of student protest. While they describe the significance and celebrate the

resistance of the student population in Africa they miss the way student movements have become, in certain respects, depolitised and subject to manipulation and co-option. They capture the ‘novelty’ of the new resistance among students but neglect the new directions that this activism can take. Students today are “situated in a complex field of societal power, class interest ... and moral positions” (Boyer, 2002: 211) that create, in conditions of social breakdown, unique and challenging forms of activism. Historically the argument remains that university students - a small minority - attending higher education in the 1960 and 1970s were regarded as either destined to become members of the ruling elite or important state functionaries, although the case for describing students of the period as elites is well made, there is a tendency to overstate the argument (Federici, 2000; Hanna, 1975; see also chapter 6).

4:7 Students and the democratic transition

In his celebrated popular history of student resistance, Boren (2001: 240) notes that the last decade of the millennium saw students in Africa play a leading role in the democratic transition: “In the wake of Eastern European revolutions against Communism, and the rampant local economic difficulties, many African students increased pro-democracy efforts and campaigned for the establishment of multiple-party political systems.” Commentators celebrated the student revolts across Africa: “political liberalisation, starting at the end of the 1980s unleashed an unprecedented wave of student rebellion on university campuses in West and Central Africa” (Konings, 2002: 180). News reports of the day were replete with analysis of the democratic struggles in Africa, often questioning the role of students.⁴⁸ Still, there is a recognised lack of serious research on the role of students in democratic transition (Buijtenhuijs and Thiriot, 1995; Mills, 2004: 671). Students were part of the broad and popular alliances that developed between opposition groups during, and immediately after, the processes of democratic change.

Perhaps it is advisable to express a certain caution about the connection that is often (and lazily) made between events in Africa and Eastern Europe. Boren (2001) makes the common assumption that the events in Africa in the 1990s were a direct corollary of the

⁴⁸ ‘La démocratie envers et contre tout’ *Jeune Afrique* 27 March - 2 April 1991; ‘Que veulent les étudiants?’ *Jeune Afrique* 11-16 July 1991

revolutions that swept aside the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe. This idea received some support from incumbent regimes conscious of the events in Europe. Mazrui (1994) has questioned these assumptions: “we cannot trace all democratic forces in Africa to the ... impact of Eastern Europe” (1994: 172). Mazrui states that the origins of these movements can be properly traced back to earlier acts of democratic struggle - long predating the upheavals in Eastern Europe (see Table 4.3). Indeed some commentators state that the origins of these movements are found in the first wave of ‘bread riots’ in Egypt in 1977 and early anti-SAP revolts (Marfleet, 2000; Alexander and Renton, 2002; Seddon and Walton, 1994).⁴⁹

Mazrui (1994: 172) continues to press his point, “What should be borne in mind is that the role model for Africa has not been necessarily the impact of demonstrations across the Berlin Wall. It has been youthful riots against armed apartheid.” Although the influence of pan-African struggles has an important impact on the mobilisation of student and trade union militants, it was the shared nature of the economic crisis gripping Africa that brought these movements together (Saul, 2001). Still it is important not to completely discount the effect of the changes in the USSR and Eastern Europe. These countries had functioned as the ideological glue for generations of leftwing activists, students and intellectuals, as well as providing scholarships for students to the Soviet bloc (Zeilig and Seddon, 2002). The dismantling of these regimes undermined both the states in Africa politically connected and funded by the USSR, and the political confidence of militants and intellectuals whose ideological moorings had been tied to Stalinism. Mazrui (1994: 173) summarised the main points at the time:

The speedy abandonment of one-partyism by Eastern European countries has made it harder for its African champions to carry adequate conviction on its behalf. It is in that sense that glasnost and perestroika in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union have helped the cause of the liberal revival in Africa - though that liberal revival was already underway regardless of events in Europe.

While these events might have broken the confidence of an older generation of activists, they gave new life to student politics that many argued had collapsed irredeemably into ‘corporatism’ and ‘factionalism’. In 1989, the movement started in the West African

⁴⁹ Some even extend these hypotheses by arguing that the current anti-capitalist movement originates in the third world and comes out of the ‘bread riots’ that greeted the impact of structural adjustment policies (Caffentzis, 2002).

state of Bénin when students demonstrated against the government in January, demanding overdue grants and a guarantee of public sector employment after graduation. The government, crippled by financial scandals, capital flight and falling tax revenue, thought it could respond as it had always done, by suppressing the protest. But the movement grew during the year to incorporate trade unions and the urban poor. Half way through the year in the hope of placating the demonstrators President Mathieu Kérékou invited a human rights campaigner into his government. In a pattern followed by other countries he set up a commission that would eventually create a 'national reconciliation conference' that included the opposition movement, trade unions, students and religious associations (*Jeune Afrique*, 1991).

Students at the University of Kinshasa in Zaire were the first to initiate the protests that almost unseated Mobutu, and led to a largely urban protest movement and transition that lasted into the middle of the 1990s (Martins, 2002). They demonstrated on 5 May 1990 asserting that the reforms announced by the dictator ten days previously were 'irrevocable'. The demonstration ended violently, after security forces attacked it. The students immediately issued an appeal for other universities and colleges across the country to rise up in solidarity, "[D]o not cross your arms. Follow our example. The dictatorship is finished. We cannot go back. Take on the state. Demonstrate! March!" (Nkongolo, 2000: 182).

The call to arms was answered. Students at the University of Lubumbashi responded to the call, demonstrating daily in the city and at the university from 9 May. On 11 May the student uprising in Katanga (the southern most region of Zaire) was brought to a swift and violent end. A 'squadron of death' was sent to the university by the president. Dozens of students who had led the strikes and demonstrations were killed, and their bodies disappeared. Their parents were unable to complain. Without wider protests the students could be picked off, killed and isolated. For thousands the massacre in Lubumbashi exposed the reality of Mobutu's 'reforms'. There was strong condemnation of the massacre from humanitarian organisations, and the Belgian government announced the immediate suspension of official bilateral assistance to Zaire. After some procrastination and strenuous denial of the reports, Mobutu authorised an official parliamentary enquiry, as a result of which a provincial governor and other senior local officials were arrested and charged with having organised the killing of one student and the injury of 13 others.

Despite a news blackout, it emerged that the massacre had sparked serious clashes between students and government forces in other towns, including Kisangani, Bukavu and Mbanza-Ngungu. The massacre was in many ways pivotal to the early stages of the transition in Zaire, and it is still the subject of controversy and debate (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002: 155-156; Munikengi and Sangol, 2004: 99).

Students were crucial to spearheading resistance in Zimbabwe (see chapter 5). In 1989 a student leaflet denounced the Investment Code that further facilitated foreign investment in Zimbabwe - viewing it “as a further entrenchment of capitalism in Zimbabwe, ... an acquiescence to the IMF and World Bank sponsored programmes ... and incompatible with the doctrine of socialism” (quoted in Tengenende, 1996: 389 – 92). Many students attended the May Day rallies in Harare, whilst the Students Union condemned the suppression of a strike by doctors: “The use of force which was exercised on Doctors while they were airing their clear, legitimate grievances is really an authoritarian and neo-fascist tendency and hence it has to be condemned.” When the university was closed on 4 October 1989 following the arrest of Students Union leaders for organising a celebration of the previous year’s Anti-Corruption Demonstration, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) General Secretary, Morgan Tsvangirai, denounced the closure in strong terms and was detained for over four weeks (Gwisai, 2002b). At the 1991 May Day celebrations, the ZCTU organised the event under the theme ‘Liberalisation or Liberation’. Workers paraded with banners denouncing SAP: ‘Employers liberated, workers sacrificed’; ‘Are we going to make 1991 the Year of the World Bank Storm?’ ; ‘The Year of the People’s Misery’. Meanwhile the Ministry of Labour distributed its own leaflets telling workers to “Suffer Now and Benefit later” (quoted in Tengenende, 1996: 427). The criticism of the ZCTU mirrored that of the University of Zimbabwe Students Union (Gwisai, 2002b).

In Mali, according to one important account, it was not university students but young unemployed college graduates who initiated the first protests on the 15 October 1990 against the one-party state. The mobilisation was small, roughly 15 young men marched through the centre of the capital with banners that declared ‘Down with the UDPM [*Union Démocratique du Peuple Malien*]’. The demonstrators were attacked and arrested by the police. As Brenner (2001: 242) contends, “their initiative immediately preceded, and may well have helped to precipitate, the emergence into public of the

clandestine opposition movement which had been actively organising and plotting for some years against the regime of Moussa Traoré” (see also Buijtenhuijs and Thirot, 1995).

Table 4:3 Incidents of student activism during the democratic transition 1985-1995

Year	Number of incidents
1985	6
1986	5
1987	10
1988	6
1989	11
1990	11
1991	15
1992	15
1993	16
1994	22
1995	5

Source: Federici (2000: 112)

The collapse into sectarian factionalism affected the student body when the transition was frustrated or after it had been achieved. The examples of Mali and Cameroon are illustrative of these processes.⁵⁰ Mali experienced a period of ‘democratic transition’ at the same time as other countries in the region (see chapter 4). There had been major demonstrations against the regime of Moussa Traoré in January 1990, when thousands were involved in street protests demanding political reform and an end to Traoré’s 22-year rule. The government was finally brought down in April 1991. The central role of students inside the *Association des Elèves et Etudiants du Mali* (AEEM) in the democratic transition is widely recognised (Brenner, 2001; Smith, 1997).⁵¹ A ‘memorandum’ was issued listing student demands in return for an immediate end to

⁵⁰ There is a prejudice involved in highlighting these cases; they respectively follow a trajectory with Senegal and Zimbabwe that will be examined in detail in subsequent chapters.

⁵¹ The slogan of the AEEM conjures up the atmosphere of the period *Oser lutter, c’est oser vaincre, la lutte continue* (To dare to fight is to dare to overcome, the struggle continues).

strikes. It included a 50% rise in the scholarship, followed by a further 25% in six months, the expansion of the scholarship to include secondary school students and physical improvements to the university and schools. While there was a widely recognised appreciation of the justness of these demands there was a similar understanding by the government that they could not hope to meet them (Smith, 1997). Within a short space of time the new government of Alpha Oumar Konaré confronted the wrath of his erstwhile political allies.⁵²

By 1993 students in AEEM were calling for action against the government for failing to honour the promises made in the Memorandum. Class-boycotts, strikes and demonstrations punctuated the following years. In 1993 the leadership of AEEM was divided between those supporting the government and those arguing for more militant action. The government were keen to exploit these divisions: “In response to this unrest, the government attempted to manipulate divisions within the AEEM leadership by funding a ‘palace coup’ in which a faction of the student leaders ... tried to replace the elected leader” (Smith: 249). One student expressed the dilemmas for many AEEM leaders with the recent experience of the ‘revolution’ (democratic transition):

I was young, I still am and I love Alpha and marched with ADEMA [*Alliance pour la Démocratie au Mali*] during the revolution to bring down Moussa. Imagine, I am a student leader and I am called by the president of my country, he invites me to his office and flatters me telling me how much potential I have. He then tells me that our activities are threatening democracy and asks for my help to save the country. I thought then what I did was in the best interest of democracy (quoted in Smith, 1997: 251).

The government carried out their manipulation of the student movement thoroughly, providing scholarships to foreign universities for several leading members of AEEM. By 1995 the student union was so divided that it had lost the support of the population and could only rely on the fractured and intermittent loyalty of its own members. AEEM even split at one point with a new organisation calling itself ‘Friends of the Schools’ who, amid accusations that it was funded by the government, argued for the opening of schools and the resumption of classes. The rupture with the ruling party was

⁵² It is worth noting that Zeric Kay Smith (1997: 264) interviewed members of the donor community who unanimously maintained that AEEM had a negative impact on the country’s democratic governance: “This negative view was also amply evident in interviews I conducted with members of the World Bank mission in Mali.”

complete by the time of the next elections, and the damage to the AEEM seemingly irreparable. Student protests were broken up by tear gas and students who had previously declared their love of Alpha “burned campaign posters of Konaré and banners of the ADEMA party” (Smith: 263).

The experience of ‘democratic transition’ in Cameroon contrasts with many of the examples already given. The process of political liberalisation was protracted and violent, yet it provided students with a space to express themselves (Konings, 2002). This expression took both a party and ethnic line. The government exploited these differences, which resulted in the emergence of two groups at the University of Yaoundé. The student body was divided between ‘strangers’, students organised in the Student’s Parliament aligned to the opposition, and the ‘indigenous’ Beti students, loyal to the ruling regime and organised in the Committee for Self-Defence and the Beti Militia. The nature of the ‘democratic transition’ led to the violence and disruption at the university that continued practically unabated between 1990 to 1996.

Students at the University of Yaoundé were deemed to be relatively privileged: the low level of political activism prior to 1991 testifies to this fact (Konings, 2002). Even in the late 1970s when the openings for university graduates began to shrink, President Ahidjo and then his successor Paul Biya forced vacancies for them in the state administration. Student numbers at the university exceeded 40,000 in 1992 although the conditions for students and staff were diabolical (Konings, 2002: 182). However part of the reason for this was a high degree of political repression that out-lawed student organisations, and police spies repeatedly disguised themselves as students to infiltrate the campus. The processes of political liberalisation in the 1990s combined with deep dissatisfaction at the deterioration of conditions under the impact of SAP. The introduction of multi-partyism did not cleanse the regime of undemocratic habits but led them to use the ‘liberalisation’ to divide the student body. As early as March 1991, *Jeune Afrique* had noted the contradiction in the progress of the ‘democratic transition’ in Cameroon; one article was titled *Le pluralisme en marche au Cameroun, mais l’Etat est en panne*.⁵³

⁵³ ‘Multi-partyism makes progress in Cameroon but the state has broken down’

The regional and ethnic cleavages became more prominent after the formation of the opposition SDF, which was founded in Anglophone Cameroon and received its initial support from the predominant Bamileke of the region (Mbembe, 1991). The reaction of the regime and Beti supporters was to form support groups, including the Commando Delta, Direct Action and the National Front for Beti Liberation. The support that Fru Ndi and the SDF did receive in the southern capital Yaoundé was frequently from the 'Anglo-Bami' communities living in the city. National political cleavages found a similar expression in the political activism of students on the campus. The president exploited ethnic divisions, emphasising his Beti origin and allying Beti students on the campus to the ruling CPDM, explicitly opposed to Anglophone Bamileke 'strangers' who often regarded the anglophone John Fru Ndi in the SDF as their champion. Although there were historical roots to the crisis that now afflicted Cameroon and the university, they had not expressed themselves so virulently in the period prior to political liberalisation. 'Parliament' members seeing themselves as revolutionaries were allied to militant elements in the opposition, that saw the overthrow of the regime as the only answer to the political stalemate in the country and at the university. The Committee for Self-Defense attempted to respond to the perceived threat from opposition members on the campus, regarding the objectives of Parliament as tantamount to the destruction of 'their' university and country. Committee members - a small minority of students - were permitted to carry knives, clubs and guns to intimidate Parliament members and worked in tandem with other vigilante groups. Parliament formed its own 'self-defence' groups (Konings, 2002).

The first political crisis at the university occurred in 1990, when students marched in favour of the SDF and multi-partyism. This led to the permanent presence of gendarmes - or ninjas as they were called by students - on the campus. Students used the political opening allowed in the country at the time to set up their first autonomous organisations that, as we have seen, quickly became polarised. By 1991, along with the opposition, students called for a sovereign national conference, a political formation that was a popular demand during the 'democratic transitions' in Africa. The year ended with a prolonged student strike at the late payment of scholarships. As the chaos on the campus escalated over the next few years the university authorities resorted to further desperate measures. In 1993 the university Chancellor Peter Aghor Tabi ordered the Beti militias on the campus to step up their attacks on students (Zeilig and Seddon, 2002).

By 1996 another group directly affiliated to Biya's party, PRESBY ('President Biya's Youth'), had replaced the self-defense groups. Like earlier formations, this group was a constellation "composed mainly of university students and other sections of the educated youth either engaged in informal-sector activities or unemployed, including a number of university graduates and dropouts" (Konings, 2002: 201). The process of political liberalisation in Cameroon demonstrates diverse patterns of political behaviours and activism in the period of 'democratic transition'. Students do not appear here as heroes or as a permanent political avant-garde, but rather as contradictory social actors, prone to political manipulation and division. The defining elements in student protests in these examples are the wider configurations of political forces involved in the 'democratic transition'.

4:8 Conclusion

Students were not isolated political actors behaving simply as a democratic vanguard; they were neither 'demons nor democrats' as some of the literature has expressed the distinction (Smith, 1997). Their role in the 'democratic transitions' was complex because it was inextricably tied to the liberalisation of political space and the manipulations of these processes by incumbent governments and political parties. The 'success' of student activism was linked to the wider social forces that they could help animate and identify with, this was tied to their ability to 'converge' their struggles with broader popular forces. Mamdani (1994) is correct to recognise that when students were effective they succeeded in "forcing an opening up" even if they lacked an alternative strategy to the state: "Its possibilities depended far more on the character of forces that student action succeeded in mobilising than its own internal energies" (Mamdani, 1994: 259).

Popular mobilisations were a response to widespread disaffection with the policies of austerity and structural adjustment, yet these movements were responding in new ways. Class structures in sub-Saharan African had been transformed, and resistance did not simply take old forms (Alavi and Shanin, 1982; Cohen, 1982). The processes of class alignment and resistance brought in new and heterogeneous forces (Harrison, 2002; Seddon, 2002; see also Seddon and Zeilig, 2005). Seddon (2002) defines the role of the

‘popular classes’ in Africa, describing a shifting constellation of political forces, that include students, unemployed graduates, informal sector traders, trade unionists and the unemployed (although not as equal ‘partners’). As Harrison (2002: 119-20) correctly formulates the issues:

The salience of youth identities derives from a broader set of changes. Economic crisis has had a direct and negative impact on the postcolonial social political project of modernisation. The ensuing ruptures of social life have impacted on ... urban society - notably they are part of the context in which the working class has become fractured and ‘informalised’... But the particular situation of youth, either leaving school to find employment, dignity and independence, or leaving university to join the middle classes, predominately through linkages with the state, gives a peculiarly sharpened twist to the experience of Africa’s recent economic decline.

This ‘informalisation’ of the social structure - or hybridisation - is not the effect of “indeterminacy of political identity” but the product of the political economy in much of Africa (Harrison, 2002: 113). These circumstances form the inherited structures that contemporary students have been forced to negotiate. Students are not ‘free-floating’ above the political and economic crisis. The resulting hybridity of social groups in Africa has transformed their activism and identity and affected their ability to exercise political agency. We can say that students expressed their status as politically privileged actors in diverse forms during the political transitions, yet repeatedly they have sparked wider protests in a period that has seen the ‘convergence of social forces’.

Higher education, as we have seen, has transported student identity into the maelstrom of the ‘structural crisis’. Mamdani (1994: 258-9), in an important study on class and the intelligentsia, has seen these processes at work: “previously a more or less guaranteed route to position and privilege, higher education seemed to lead more and more students to the heart of the economic and social crisis.” Students are no longer the ‘transitory’ social group waiting to be allotted government employment; on the contrary they have become pauperised, converging more and more with the wider urban poor: social groups that they had historically regarded as their ‘responsibility’ to liberate. However student activism is still instilled with an important element of elitism, but now tempered by the realities of campus poverty. They have a considerable ability to mobilise in relatively autonomous urban spaces, achieving an organisational coherence that is rarely matched by other social groups.

This chapter has concentrated on the inherited structures that students have been forced to manoeuvre. These structures are not entirely determining, and within the context of the neo-liberal reform of education across the continent in the 1980s and 1990s patterns of student resistance and activism varied greatly. One of the central factors influencing student politics was the ability to contest the ideological foundations of structural adjustment. The capacity of student organisations to confront the ‘world view’ presented by their governments (before and after the transitions) and the IFIs, helped shape their political agency. But their ability to do this was influenced by wider political forces in society, and they were disabled by the lack of a coherent ideological alternative to neo-liberal reforms. Students found themselves buffeted together with the popular classes, by the resumption of a more or less unopposed politics of adjustment and austerity.

Student activism has been affected by the vacillations in the popular movements that they have helped to mobilise. Once new governments had been installed (Senegal, Mali) or old regimes revived (Cameroon, Zimbabwe), the tempo of resistance and student activism receded, often returning to the ‘corporatist’ and piecemeal demands that many commentators have wrongly interpreted as representing a new phase in student activism (see section 4:6 above). The ‘corporatism’ - or economism⁵⁴ - of student politics is not symptomatic of a new and qualitatively different student movement, nor, as Bathily *et al* (1995: 401) imply, of a slide into irrelevance:

[S]tudents ...are only in a transition, over which they have no control because they have no impact on the socio-economic stakes. So instead of being actors/initiators of this change, they have turned into mere artefacts of this evolution.

According to this account, the only barrier preventing students from assuming their full role as ‘actors/initiators’ is their temporality. However, the status of ‘student’ - at university, as graduate, as a ‘cartouchard’⁵⁵ or part of the mass of unemployed - is not impermanent. The crisis for students in sub-Saharan Africa is precisely because they are

⁵⁴ Interestingly the same criticism of ‘economism’ is made of the trade union movement, forgetting that an umbilical cord connects political and economic struggles. This was a point made powerfully by Rosa Luxemburg (1906) in her book *The Mass Strike*.

⁵⁵ Term used by in Senegal to describe a student who has exhausted almost all of their chances (literately their ‘cartridges’) giving them just one more chance in the annual exams (Bianchini, 2002: 368).

not in 'transition'; on the contrary they are increasingly permanent 'artefacts' in the post-colonial impasse. Their activism – always complex and contradictory – retreats into a routine of 'economic' and factional contestation when wider popular and democratic movements in society decline or are frustrated.

In Malawi students at the university together with academic staff were important in the mobilisations that eventually toppled the Banda regime in the multiparty elections in 1994. As Kerr and Mapanje (2002: 86) have stated, "students and staff marched in protest against the regime during the demonstrations sparked by the Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter of March 1992 and during the riots of May in the same year." Although they note a wave of activism during the transition from 1991 to 1993, they also lament the decline of student politics into 'corporatist' concerns after this period. By 1994 there were even cases of male students at the university attacking and ridiculing female students and lecturers.

After the victory of Bakilli Muluzi and his United Democratic Front, the Malawian government participated uncritically in the project of structural adjustment and economic liberalisation that had given resistance to the previous regime such impetus. The University of Malawi continues to deteriorate: "Research funding was available only for programs financed by donor communities with specific agendas. Government subventions for salaries and such essential resources as books, journals, computers, photocopiers, paper ... remained pitifully small" (Kerr and Mapanji, 2002: 87). The 'lassitude' that Kerr and Mapanji claim affected students after the elections in 1994 was tied to the resumption of economic structural adjustment programmes after a period of democratic transition. The same disillusionment and 'lassitude' gripped student politics in dozens of campuses across sub-Saharan Africa as governments that had emerged from the 'transition' committed themselves to implementing IMF and WB reforms. The predominance of neo-liberalism across the continent after the democratic transition ensured a quick death for the African renaissance and the movements that had heralded it. These arguments are examined again in chapter 8. The next chapter - drawing on my own empirical research and interview data - examines in detail the experiences of the student movement in Zimbabwe.

Chapter 5

Reform, revolt and student activism in Zimbabwe

5:1 Introduction

This chapter draws on a range of sources, including interviews with student activists to examine the political agency of university students in Zimbabwe, concentrating specifically on the period from 1995. Students as political agents of these transitions – involved in the trials and tribulations of remaking their ‘historical and geographical realities’ (Harvey, 2000) – are the focus of the chapter. The extent to which students were able to exercise political agency in the protests that punctuated the period between 1995 and 2000 and the subsequent formation of the MDC is interrogated. Following the research objectives, the role of student organisations and ideas are examined to uncover the degree to which student activists operated with a coherent political philosophy. Consistent with arguments made in chapters 1 and 2 there is an explicit emphasis on the voices of student activists. These voices, as we have seen, are justified in the thesis as witnesses to the ‘democratic transition’ frequently forgotten by the ‘condescension of posterity’. Student voices are used in two ways in the chapter. Firstly they reconstruct historical events, from the perspective of their activism, and they are, therefore, used as historical sources in conjunction with secondary data. Secondly, they are interrogated for the meaning of student activism they give us.

The chapter is divided into three principal parts. The first describes the main contours of the country’s political and economic history, focusing on the recent period of transition. The second part of the chapter considers the evolution of the student movement from the 1960s and the development of the student intelligentsia. The final part of the chapter makes extensive use of interviews with leading student activists to reconstruct the history of the student movement from 1995, and the development of the opposition.

Map 5:1 Principal institutions of higher education in Zimbabwe



- △ Harare Polytechnic
- △ University of Zimbabwe
- ▲ National University of Science and Technology
- △ Great Zimbabwe University
- ▲ Mutare Polytechnic
- △ Africa University
- ▲ Midlands State University

Source: adapted from The World Factbook (CIA)

5:2 Political and economic background

There are a number of key tasks for the first part of this chapter. It is necessary to present a brief historical sketch of the principal events in Zimbabwe's history, that provides the background both to the recent upheavals and the political and economic world that students have been forced to inhabit. This section of the chapter concentrates on waves of resistance that have confronted the colonial and independent state, focusing principally on events after 1995, the period of aborted democratic transition. There are two central questions: What has happened in Zimbabwe in recent years that led to these events? And, crucially for the study, what roles have Zimbabwean students and other members of civil society played in the struggles that have shaken the country? (a question that will be taken up fully in the second and third parts of the chapter).

Zimbabwe's recent political and economic crisis has seen the politicisation of youth and students, and youth have become one of the indispensable political forces supporting the regime. Most notably, communities are intimidated by the government armed youth militia – the Youth Brigades – that have been central to the political upheavals in the country. Elliot Manyika, the country's recent youth minister, set up camps to indoctrinate youth so that they “fully appreciate their country and stand by it in times of crisis” (*The Zimbabwe Independent*, 2002). The crisis has affected every aspect of society: the government pushed through legislation in the run-up to the 2002 presidential election that mimicked George Bush's legislation on the ‘war on terrorism’ that made it almost impossible to oppose the government. The Public Order and Security Act (POSA) carries the death penalty for acts of “insurgency, banditry, sabotage and terrorism” (*The Guardian*, 2002a). One of the country's army chiefs, General Vitalis Zvinavashe, said that the army would refuse to recognise a government led by a person who is not a veteran of the war for independence. The picture in Zimbabwe on the eve of the recent crisis reveals a pattern of uneven and unequal development. Figures from 2000 show that less than five percent of the population, a mix of black and white families and businesses, monopolised almost 70 percent of the nation's income (Gwisai, 2002b: 3-4). With 36 percent of the population living on less than a dollar a day and 64.2 percent living on less than two dollars a day, Zimbabwe confronts extremes of poverty and wealth (UNDP, 2004: 141). By early 2004 the country was also facing its worst economic crisis since independence, with

unemployment at over 65 percent and inflation hitting 700 percent (*The Economist*, 2004).

The University of Zimbabwe (UZ) was drawn into general collapse. Employment in the formal sector has shrunk, leaving thousands of graduates without work or the prospect of getting any. Female students were reportedly pushed into prostitution to pay for their studies and food in the privatised dinner halls at the UZ (*Socialist Worker*, 2001a). Fuel and food prices were forcing rural communities to move into overcrowded shantytowns on the outskirts of the two major cities, Harare and Bulawayo. In 2002, it was estimated that 33 percent of the population between 15 and 49 years of age was infected with HIV, making Zimbabwe one of the worst affected countries in the world (UNAIDS, 2004).

In addition the country was embroiled in a war in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from 1998, involving more than 15,000 troops, a quarter of the entire army. Army generals and businessmen were rewarded with contracts on mines and with logging companies. Mugabe's support for the government of the DRC was also rewarded by the gift of vast areas of land. One company, run by leading members of the ruling party, Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), was granted what Global Witness calls "the world's largest logging concession by gaining rights to exploit 33 million hectares of forests" – an area ten times the size of Switzerland (Global Witness, 2001).

While the antecedents of this situation doubtlessly have their origin in the state structures inherited at independence (Astrow, 1983), it is the more recent popular protest movements that have shaped Zimbabwe's current political trajectory (Gwisai, 2002a; Raftopoulos and Sachikonye, 2001). Since 1995 Zimbabwe has been rocked by mass struggles, which have threatened the regime and the agenda of structural adjustment previously pursued somewhat reluctantly by the government. These struggles have received almost no attention in mainstream accounts of the crisis, which prefer to see the current situation arising out of Mugabe's autocratic rule. As one

activist observes, “The main point I want to make is that we were on the verge of a sort of revolution in Zimbabwe” (Luke Kasuwanga, interview 9 July 2001).⁵⁶

Out of these upheavals came one of the most powerful opposition movements on the continent. The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) emerged from the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) in 1999 and became the most important force to challenge Mugabe since independence in 1980. The party almost won the parliamentary election in 2000, gaining 57 seats, despite widespread violence by ZANU-PF that cost 31 lives. The fact that it came close to toppling the regime after having only existed for 16 months is an indication of the extent of the changes sweeping Zimbabwean society (Alexander, 2000a). Recent events have confirmed the decline of the MDC, under the combined impact of state repression and the internal decay of the party. In parliamentary elections in 2005 – widely accused of being rigged – the MDC lost sixteen seats to the ZANU-PF which secured the necessary two-thirds majority needed to unilaterally change the constitution. Norma Kriger observed before the election that the ruling party had already won the elections: “The ruling party has already laid the groundwork to control the outcome and has honed its skills in terrorizing voters in by-elections” (2005: 32).

The MDC is an enigma. While it was formed by the leadership of the ZCTU – Morgan Tsvangirai and Gibson Sibanda – it includes industrialists and white farmers, and a constellation of smaller pressure groups and left wing parties. Eddie Cross, formerly the party’s spokesperson on economic matters, is a well-known entrepreneur who champions privatisation and the policies of the IMF and World Bank. It has also received funding from the British Conservative Party, and when presented with the party’s economic programme the World Bank reportedly said, “We would have been proud to produce a programme like this, let alone have it handed to us” (quoted in Alexander, 2000a: 394).

⁵⁶ ISO activist Luke Kasuwanga. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations are taken from interviews conducted during the first phase of the fieldwork for this study in England (London) July 2001 and Zimbabwe (Harare) April 2002.

5:2:1 The rise and fall of Rhodesia

Zimbabwe emerged out of the authoritarian and racist state that was established by the British over a century ago. In 1890 the territory was marked out and handed to the imperialist adventurer Cecil Rhodes, who controlled the area for his British South Africa Company. The British confronted wave after wave of resistance culminating in the eventual defeat of the *Chimurenga* – the anti-colonial revolt in 1898. The following 40 years witnessed the mass expropriation of land from peasant farmers and communities, the repression of any form of resistance, and forced labour on mines and in factories. Thousands of Africans were forced off their land and herded into what were called communal lands, or reservations. The racial land division was consolidated by two pieces of legislation, the Land Apportionment Act of 1930 and the Land Tenure Act of 1969, both of which prohibited Africans from owning land in white areas (Matowanyika, 1997). As late as the late 1980s, approximately 4,000 white farmers controlled almost 70 percent of the most productive land, forcing more than seven million peasants onto dry and drought-ridden plots (Herbst, 1990: 37).

In 1927 the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) was established as the country's first trade union. It was founded principally by migrant workers from South Africa. Large numbers of white workers were recruited in both Britain and South Africa to work on the railways and mines. These groups of workers were initially responsible for a high level of militancy, leading strikes, and even forming a Rhodesian Labour Party, inspired by the British labour movement (Van Onselen, 1976; Mandaza, 1986; Bond, 1998). In 1923 Rhodes' company rule was ended and limited self government was granted to Southern Rhodesia. The Reform Party, a coalition of British interests, dominated the political scene, and sought to solidify an alliance between an increasingly militant white working class and the state. Only white workers were allowed to strike or belong to unions, although they were not allowed to form independent trade unions. White workers became wedded to the Rhodesian state, splitting the working class on racial and craft lines. Even so, a small Southern Rhodesian Communist Party emerged from a left wing faction of the Labour Party. However, it was soon paralysed by following Russia's advice to form 'popular fronts' and agitation amongst African workers was deemed too provocative to build these cross-class alliances (Raftopoulos and Phimister, 1997).

The state managed to force through a high level of industrialisation from the 1930s onwards. By the 1950s, for example, annual growth was ten percent. But as the economy expanded, so did the African working class. By 1950, the industrial working class, concentrated in urban areas around the industrial centre of what are today Bulawayo and Harare, had reached 469,000 (Phimister, 1994: 64). The 1948 general strike was the first major confrontation that threatened the state and gave life to the nationalist movement.

Despite its militancy, the strike illustrated a weakness in the working class. Although there were African organisations in Southern Rhodesia by the late 1940s, there was not, in the words of one commentator, a “single organisation which was able to co-ordinate and unify the struggles of Africans” (quoted in Raftopoulos and Phimister, 1997:71). This meant that elitist, even conservative, forces could come to the fore. Benjamin Burumbo, a local shop owner who became a leader of the strike, falsely assured a meeting of strikers that the government had increased their wages in line with their demands. He became a leading figure in the nationalist movement. Mkushi Khumalo, an activist during 1948, described Burumbo in the following terms:

Burumbo was not an employee. Those who associate him with the strike are making a mistake. He was simply an opportunist ... Burumbo decided to join us and went about giving speeches as if he were an employee, and yet in fact he was a businessman, an employer. It was under these circumstances that Burumbo became a participant in the strike (quoted in Raftopoulos and Phimister, 1997: 69-70).

This example demonstrates an idea discussed in the chapter 3, regarding the organisational and political weaknesses of the emergent Africa working class. As we saw (see section 3:2 above) this enlarged the political space for a petty-bourgeois ‘student-intelligentsia’. Some have argued that the period demonstrated the failure, partly as a result of the political paralysis caused by ideas associated to Stalinism, to build an independent organisation that could develop and lead the black working class (Astrow, 1983; Gwisai, 2002b). At each point of this failure, during the general strike in 1948 and later throughout the 1960-1961 *Zhii* strike movement, other political forces and classes were able to capitalise on the organisational vacuum left by the working class. Benjamin Burumbo managed to force himself on the movement, helping ultimately to return the country to the authorities (Gray, 1960: 326-7; Astrow, 1983:

21). Joshua Nkomo, the railway union leader, was also a representative of the same phenomenon. He was a young graduate who had made his name in the 1948 general strike, sponsored by the railways in the hope that he could help offset the growth of radicalism. He rose to become the leading figure in nationalist politics in the 1950s and 1960s. The dearth of socialist politics, some commentators have argued, allowed a group of educated Africans, a petty bourgeoisie, to lead a movement that had the potential for far greater liberation (Astrow, 1983: 21). As discussed in chapter 3, this phenomenon was a key element in the pre-independence nationalist movements across much of the continent, which saw the predominant role played by a 'student-intelligentsia' that reflected the 'ideological immaturity' of other social groups (Cliff, 1963).

The 1948 strikes did, however, provide the impetus for the formation of the first trade union congress, and in 1954 the Southern Rhodesia Trade Union Congress (SRTUC) was founded, headed by Joshua Nkomo. This in turn precipitated the creation, three years later, of an overtly nationalist organisation, the African National Congress (ANC). Trade unionists were the main source of support, and trade union leaders occupied most of the main positions in the organisation. Nkomo became the organisation's first president. After the ANC was banned in 1959, Nkomo formed the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) (Raftopoulos, 1997).

In 1962 the Rhodesian Front, a right wing party headed by the racist Ian Smith, won power. Smith declared independence from Britain in 1965, in what was called a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). The decision to declare 'independence' was made in the context of the growth of resistance in Rhodesia and the rising politicisation across the continent that resounded with independence movements. The white minority sought to ensure their supremacy by supporting Smith in a continent that had been turning out the colonisers. Nkomo sought active intervention against this decision from the UK government, and although British courts condemned the UDI as 'treasonable' the Labour prime minister Harold Wilson refused to physically intervene (Foot, 1968: 259-270).

Radical members of the nationalist movement, including Robert Mugabe, broke with Nkomo to form the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU). Interestingly, when the

party was first formed it was regarded as isolated from wider society. As Fay Chung (1995: 146) has noted: “when ZANU was first formed in 1963 it was labeled as a party of intellectuals cut off from the masses ...[and] intellectual and professional development ... were seen as necessary to overthrow the settler regime.” By the 1970s the fight against white minority rule was led by a left wing intelligentsia informed by Maoist and Stalinist ideas. They focused on guerrilla war in the countryside, and increasingly on a student leadership that had been expelled in the early 1970s from the University of Rhodesia (see section 5:3:3 below). Arguably this ‘guerrilla’ war — conceived of as a popular liberation but in reality involving self-appointed leaders — was entirely consistent with the logic of student mobilisation. Students were politically privileged actors transforming society in the name of the ‘voiceless.’ In this respect Cliff (1963: 16) elucidates the action of this group: the intelligentsia as a non-specialised section of society “is the obvious source of a ‘professional revolutionary elite’.”

These tactics were reasonably successful, and by the end of 1970s the Patriotic Front forces were somewhere between 35,000 and 40,000 strong. The government’s forces were engaged on approximately six fronts, with martial law imposed throughout the whole country (Callinicos and Rogers, 1980: 9-15). Although these tactics achieved some success, they failed to win a decisive victory over the Rhodesian Front.⁵⁷ Ian Smith was finally forced to negotiate and, largely under pressure from Mozambique, Mugabe accepted the Lancaster House agreement. By 1980 Zimbabwe had its first fully independent multi-racial elections.

5:2:2 Land, independence and reconciliation

Zimbabwean independence involved one of the most spectacular and instant reconciliations in the history of armed conflict. The 1979 Lancaster House agreement, which led directly to independence the following year, guaranteed the property of the small white population. Ian Smith’s regime conceded to black majority rule on the basis of a promise that the property rights of the white majority would be safeguarded, and

⁵⁷ For those fighting against the Rhodesians there was an additional risk — even in the middle of the war Mugabe was murdering his opponents fighting with him in the liberation struggle (Astrow, 1983: 107-108).

that, when land reform eventually came, white farmers would be fully compensated. At the same time Robert Mugabe and Joshua Nkomo, the two leaders of the independence war, were persuaded to adopt a new constitution that prevented the forced expropriation of white farms for ten years. This was a far cry from Mugabe's promise a few years before that none of the white exploiters would be allowed to keep an acre of their land (Saunders, 2000: 17). The promise was extracted with the 'commitment' from the Thatcher government to make millions of pounds available for land reform in the future (Cliffe, 2000: 42-3).⁵⁸

The only official commitment secured by the Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, was that the first government would not be able to confiscate white property. Nevertheless Mugabe went on to win the election with the pledge that thousands of black families would be settled on white land within three years. The initial resettlement figure was for 162,000 families. In the end only 70,000 families were resettled in that period. The 1980s did see a certain amount of successful resettlement, more than other resettlement programmes on the continent, but much of this was often popularly driven through by 'illegal' occupations. The period that followed was notable for its failure to continue the limited progress that had been made. Productivity even outstripped that in the communal areas on a hectare for hectare basis. For those who experienced the resettlement it transformed their lives, but for the thousands left landless and poor it was undoubtedly a bitter disappointment (Kinsey and Binswanger, 1993).

Despite the lapse of the constitutional block on compulsory purchase in 1990, the regime failed to pursue redistribution with any seriousness. There are three principal reasons. Firstly, the taxes on huge profits made from export crops by white farmers were a major disincentive to pursue large-scale resettlement. Secondly, the priority during this period was to expand black commercial farmland, a process of 'indigenisation', but this was coupled with confusion about whether the problems of communal areas could be resolved through expanded resettlement. Finally, and crucially, the adoption of a structural adjustment programme in the early 1990s led to a

⁵⁸ The precise figure is still contested. It was subject to the colonial tradition of a 'gentleman's agreement' (see Astrow for a good examination of the processes taking place during the Lancaster House negotiations, 1983: 154-160).

massive reduction of public expenditure on social programmes, which were essential to the resettlement projects (Bond and Manyanya, 2002: 114-121).

Another important factor was the relationship of the regime to white farmers. White farmers, and the white community generally, never integrated socially or politically with the black population after independence.⁵⁹ However, they were not ‘colonialists’ and ‘imperialists’ (as labelled by Mugabe), but rather useful allies to the regime. As a consequence, 20 years after independence the percentage of white land resettled by black families was a small fraction of the total land owned by the white population, while most of the money promised at the ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ in London years before failed to appear. From the hundreds of millions promised by the British only a meagre £44 million ever materialised and, like all aid, it came with conditions, meaning that after the wrangling about what it could be used on, not even all of this sum was spent (Alexander, 2003).

Some of the land that was redistributed in the early 1990s was used to create a class of black commercial farmers. Although there were certainly a number of questionable deals over the allocation of land to black commercial farmers, at this point not all of the land went to political friends. Yet the combined effect of structural adjustment and the wave of popular protests after 1996 decisively shifted the pattern and use of land allocation. Two hundred farms were purchased and distributed to army officers and party officials whose loyalty could be guaranteed with the promise of land. One giant estate was parcelled into 27 smaller farms and presented to party figures, including presidential spokesman George Charamba. The military also benefited – General Vitalis Zvinavashe received his own estate, while thousands of poor Zimbabweans were ignored. In the recent land grab it is again political patronage that has determined allocation. Loyal reporters, leading politicians and soldiers have been given land, but title deeds have remained with the government, ensuring continued loyalty to the regime. Still, the pattern of current commercial land allocation is a small part of the total

⁵⁹ A cursory glance at Zimbabwe reveals the total lack of integration. It is typical across Africa today, even in countries that had no experience of settler communities. The image is identical to the popular conception of apartheid South Africa – rich white suburbs, with large green lawns watered by black staff and black security guards protecting palatial houses that boast swimming pools and a fleet of cars. These areas sit cheek by jowl with sprawling townships and terrible poverty. The lifestyles (and even the attitudes) of those who live like this have not changed substantially since independence (see Hancock, 1989).

picture and it is important to remember that recent land occupations have often been popularly driven, and the government has sought desperately to control them (Alexander, 2003).⁶⁰

The compromises, procrastination and ultimately the failure to confront the issue of land redistribution are representative of the general approach of the regime. In the immediate aftermath of independence Mugabe made his intentions clear. He asserted that there would be no fundamental transformation of society and, despite the change in government, white businesses and farmers could rest assured that their living conditions would be guaranteed. On 17 April 1980, in front of an international crowd that included Prince Charles, Robert Mugabe reassured the country:

If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend. If yesterday you hated me, today you cannot avoid the love that binds you to me and me to you (quoted in Smith, 1981: 210).

For a time, the desire to seek reconciliation and restore confidence to white farmers and businesses looked as though it would bring down the government.⁶¹ As one writer observed: “Despite its Marxist-Leninist rhetoric the ZANU-PF government tried to preserve the largely white-owned productive structures” (Skalnes, 1995:5). The gross inequalities of ownership and control in the economy were maintained and shored up after independence.

It was not simply the inequalities that remained after independence, but much of the Rhodesian state. A great deal of the colonial legal system remained intact, ensuring unparalleled powers for the ruling party. The state continued to suppress dissent – it labelled oppositionists ‘terrorists’ and massacred ‘enemy’ communities. The recent violence expresses the continuity and escalation of state repression, not its first appearance. The worst examples of this brutality were the massacres in Matabeleland in the 1980s. The majority of the population are Ndebele speakers who were regarded as

⁶⁰ Alexander (2003) argues that up until February 2000 occupations were often popularly driven, similar to the situation in the early 1980s.

⁶¹ It did not take years for bitterness to build up after independence. There were many who were disillusioned with Mugabe’s moderate stand. The incident involving Edgar Tekere, a leading figure in the party and a close confidante of Mugabe, is illustrative. Only a year after independence he was implicated in an attack on a farmhouse and the death of a white farmer. After these events Mugabe, in the words of one commentator at the time, “spiked the guns of his troublesome left wing.” Resentment amongst the left wing and thousands who had waited for victory and liberation was growing (see Smith, 1981: 209-218).

supporters of the rival liberation organisation ZAPU, which was led by Nkomo. It has been estimated that between 1981 and 1988 between 10,000 and 20,000 'dissidents' were killed. Thousands more were herded into concentration camps, raped, tortured and starved (Alexander *et al*, 2000; Legal Resources Foundation, 1997).

At independence, the union movement was fragmented and disorganised. Yet in the first years of independence there was an upsurge of industrial action – 200 disputes were officially recorded between 1980 and 1981. In many ways these strikes contained the grievances of a generation. Although many were concerned with low wages, others were against racist managers and the discrimination against trade union representation. The disputes helped to ensure that the government implemented a number of important reforms in the next few years. Later on the government urged the merger of unions into a central federation, the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU). To start with, the ZCTU was tied closely to the government. The ZCTU was packed with Mugabe's friends, and even a member of his family. This relationship persisted while the government implemented limited reforms – a national minimum wage, legislation enshrining labour rights, and health and education provision (Saunders, 2000: 18).

For a few years in the early 1980s the government increased spending on health and education, and picked up considerable support both in towns and the countryside. Between 1980 and 1990 primary and secondary schools were built across Zimbabwe. Enrolment increased in primary education from 1.2 million in 1980 to more than 2.2 million by 1989, and in secondary schools from only 74,000 to 671,000 in the same period (Razemba, 1994: 89-91). However, by the mid-1980s the economy had begun to stagnate. From 1986 to 1987 per capita GDP declined rapidly (Bond, 1998: 150). Loans from the World Bank, happily accepted by the government, caused foreign debt to rise from US\$786 million in 1980 to US\$3 billion in 1990 (Razemba, 1994: 131). Having precipitated the crisis a group of neo-liberals gathered around the finance and economics minister, Bernard Chidzero. Thus, under some duress, but not without complicity, the government invited the World Bank in to provide proposals for the

reorganisation of the economy. Supporters of the state capitalist reforms of the early years became marginalised.⁶²

5:2:3 Structural adjustment

Until recently Zimbabwe had one of the most important economies in Africa. Unlike most African countries, it had fairly well developed industrial and agricultural sectors and a relatively developed infrastructure that produced a range of goods in a number of industries. Manufacturing, at 24.8 percent of GDP in 1990, was about three times higher than in most African countries (Gwisai, 2002b: 4). The sector employed 16.5 percent of all those in the formal economy. Agriculture was also diversified, growing such crops as tobacco, wheat and cotton. Coupled with this was a massive concentration of ownership and control that originates from the state set up by the British in 1890. Almost 60 percent of industrial production was controlled by foreign capital (Gwisai, 2002b: 3-4; see also Bond, 1998; Alexander, 2002).

The government introduced the first full Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) in 1991, although the IMF had been pressing it to reduce expenditure and devalue the Zimbabwean dollar from as early as 1982 (Razemba, 1994). Following similar – and similarly disastrous – programmes in most of Africa, the World Bank insisted on trade liberalisation, the removal of import controls and export incentives, deregulation – including changes to what was regarded as ‘restrictive’ labour legislation – and widespread public sector reforms (Jackson, 1997).

The government now pursued policies involving privatisation and the closure of state companies deemed unprofitable by Western donors, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The year after the implementation of ESAP saw a huge 11 percent fall in per capita GDP (Bond, 1998: 150). More than 20,000 jobs were lost between January 1991 and July 1993. In 1993 unemployment had reached a record 1.3 million from a total population of about ten million (Bond, 1998: 92-94). Tor Skjalnes (1985: 141) reported 25,000 civil service jobs lost by 1995, while “inflation rose and exports declined.” The new policies promoted by Washington and the IMF had, it

⁶² Skjalnes (1995: 131) makes this point: “Chidzero was the one who steered the new economic philosophy through the cabinet.”

seemed, failed to stem, and by all accounts helped to deepen, the recession that continued to grip Zimbabwe.

A new militancy in civil society was born out of this turmoil. By the late 1980s sections of society that had previously been termed 'middle class' (and loyal) were radicalised by the fall in living standards. At the same time, opposition at the UZ emerged, criticising the rightward shift in government policy (see part 4 below). Most significant was the rupture between the government and the trade union leadership. The old leadership of the ZCTU that had followed and supported the government since independence was replaced by a new one that was influenced by the radicalisation in society. In 1988 Tsvangirai – a mineworker and activist – became general secretary of the ZCTU. The following year he supported student protests at the UZ and was detained for six weeks on the suspicion of being a South African spy. The period was crucial for a new generation of militants and trade unionists. As Tendai Biti – a leading activist at the time, argues: "It was the first time people criticised the legitimacy of these heroes. It showed you can make noise and not get killed" (quoted in Alexander, 2000a: 386).

Gwisai (2002b) notes that while the role Mugabe had played in the struggle for national liberation had carried some weight in the 1980s, those who had only been children during the struggle for independence were a new urban working class – and even the 'born-frees', those born after independence in 1980 – and less patient with the perceived failure of that 'liberation'. Students were at the forefront of these new critique and they saw through what appeared increasingly to be Mugabe's hollow promises. The trade union leadership even proclaimed during the 1991 May Day rally, "Are we going to make 1991 the year of the World Bank storm?" (Tengende, 1994: 426). Later the ZCTU produced an alternative economic plan, 'Beyond ESAP', opposing some of the government's IMF sponsored programme. But in the liberal rhetoric of 'Beyond ESAP' lay warning signs for those hoping for radicalism from the new union leadership.

5:2:4 The upheavals

It was not until the mid-1990s that Zimbabwe experienced its first significant upheavals against the austerity policies pursued by the government. Many activists regard the demonstration against police brutality in 1995, triggered by the murder of several

people by the police in Harare, as a turning point. One young student activist, Luke Kasuwanga, who helped to organise the demonstration, recalls how it inspired him:

When I reached home I waited for the 8 o'clock news. The news was read – Harare was burning! You could see fire everywhere. The minister was interviewed and we could see that he was sweating. He was saying, "We know the people responsible and we are going to get them. They are going to pay for it." And it all came under my name ... At first you have to deny that you are involved [but] later on we are proud that we were at the forefront. And funnily enough one of my workmates – who wasn't involved in politics – he attended that demonstration, and that demonstration made him solid from that period ... Why am I saying this? It politicised me. That was the first time I was in the leading role as a worker (interview 9 July 2001).

But it was not until 1996 that Zimbabwean society experienced a much broader movement. In August there was the first national government workers' strike. Tens of thousands came out on strike against job losses, bad working conditions and government corruption. Although health workers, nurses and doctors initiated the strike, it spread rapidly to other workers – teachers, civil servants and almost every branch of the public sector. It affected every area of the country and crippled the government. As the strike continued it developed clearly political aims, eventually even demanding a reduction in the size of the cabinet. An elected committee of rank and file trade unionists directed the strike. Flying pickets moved from workplace to workplace arguing with workers to join the movement (Gwisai, 2002b: 14-15). Tafadzwa Choto, who was active at the time, recognised the importance of the period: "I think the turning point was the government workers' strike in 1996. It really gave confidence to so many" (interview 10 July 2001).

Trade union leaders found that they too were outpaced by the dispute. Before long they persuaded strikers to accept a government offer. The strike ended in an agreement that included a large increase in wages, the promise of a new labour act, a guarantee that workers would receive bonuses, and the recognition of public sector unions. However, the agreement did not hold. By November health sector workers were on strike again, staying out until February 1997. The strike also saw the active intervention of the International Socialist Organisation (ISO). Although at the time it had only 50 members, centred mostly at the UZ in Harare, they were able to produce leaflets calling for indefinite action and had participated in the strikes in Harare and the second city,

Bulawayo. As well as calling for the election of a strike committee to take the strike forward, they pressed for more militant action, including picketing government buildings (Zeilig, 2002b).

The following year saw more demonstrations and strikes than at any time since independence. Many activists have noted how students combined with workers who linked the struggle in the city with the need to distribute land in the countryside. As Tendai Beti remembers: "This was a momentous occasion in the history of this country because it brought confidence – you could smell working class power in the air" (quoted in Alexander, 2000a: 389). Rural labourers and peasants invaded commercial farms in various provinces and tried to resist the police who had been sent by the ruling ZANU-PF to evict them and restore 'law and order'.

The previously marginalised war veterans broke onto the scene. They were, for the most part, former fighters from the guerrilla war against the Rhodesian state in the 1970s. They had been abandoned since independence, and by the mid-1990s most of them were unemployed, without pensions or land. Galvanised by the mass upheavals shaking society, they joined demonstrations and started making their own demands. They denounced Mugabe at public forums, including the annual Heroes' Commemoration. (Alexander, 2000b).⁶³

By the end of 1997 Mugabe, concerned by the threat posed by the war veterans, imposed a tax, a War Veterans' Levy, which he argued would be used to fund pensions for those who had fought in the war. As a result another strike, a two-day stayaway, was called by the ZCTU. Thousands of demonstrators converged on Harare, and by the end of the strike the government had agreed to remove the proposed tax. The wave of militancy that had started in 1996 continued into 1998. The year started with a 'bread riot' led by housewives, provoked by an increase in the cost of basic commodities. It frightened the government (Saunders, 2000). As the Minister of Home Affairs commented immediately after the riots: "The just-ended three-day food riots which came soon after the announcement of the general increase of prices of basic commodities, mealie meal, rice, cooking oil and bread, represent the most violent riots

⁶³ It is important to be clear that today the 'war veterans' are divided. While some support the government, others are aware of the cynicism of the new policy towards them.

the country has experienced since independence” (quoted in Zeilig, 2002b: 87). Eight people were killed, hundreds injured and thousands of people arrested. The riots quickly combined workers, students and the unemployed, while leaders in the ZCTU tried to dissuade workers from joining the demonstrations. Again the ISO helped to organise similar movements in other towns and produced a leaflet that called on others to join the struggle. The organisation’s slogan ‘Shinga Mushandi Shinga! Qina Msebenzi Qina!’ (‘Workers be resolute! Fight on!’) has become the *de facto* motto of the trade union movement. Although there is a dispute about the role of the group in the existing literature (Bond, 2002; Raftopoulos and Sachikonye, 2001), Gwisai (2002b) criticises the way the role of the organisation has been marginalised in Bond’s work (2002) and almost completely ignored in Raftopoulos and Sachikonye (2001). However, the organisation was an important ‘ideological tool’ in the student movement, equipping a layer of student activists with ideological resources that informed much of their political energy and hope (see section 5:2:5 below).

The union congress was not completely wrong-footed. The general secretary, Morgan Tsvangirai, understood the importance of the new wave of militancy. He even called for a general strike without consulting the general council of the congress, and was almost removed as a result. Kasuwanga illustrates the way the movement took the lead:

When ZCTU was calling for stayaways, these stayaways were called after the housewives and the unemployed were rioting in the townships spreading around Zimbabwe. Even the 1998 bread demonstrations, which shook the whole of Zimbabwe [were] done by housewives on their own. Even Tsvangirai said he was nothing to do with it. It began spontaneously on its own (interview 9 July 2001).

The war veteran leader Chenjerai Hunzvi became a key loyalist to Mugabe during the period, even though his ‘profile’ as a middle class and privileged member of the establishment could not contrast more with the peasants and ex-combatants he now claimed to lead.⁶⁴

The ZCTU was mindful of events that had led to the removal of Kenneth Kaunda in neighbouring Zambia in the early 1990s. A movement led and organised by the

⁶⁴ Chenjerai Hunzvi was a qualified doctor who had studied and lived in Eastern Europe. He was fluent in Polish, Romanian and French, and did not return to Zimbabwe until 1990, having left the country on a scholarship in the 1970s (see his obituary in *The Guardian*, 2001).

Zambian Congress of Trade Unions had swept the old regime from power in elections held in 1991. The Movement for Multi-Party Democracy (MMD) came to power headed by Frederick Chiluba, the general secretary of the only trade union federation that had helped to co-ordinate strikes and demonstrations that undermined the old regime (Ihonvbere, 1996; Larmer, 2002).

5:2:5 What kind of opposition party?

Between 1996 and 1998 the ZCTU repeatedly sought to lead and direct a mass movement that persistently pre-empted their direction. Rank and file activists, often organising in labour forums (where large groups of organised trade unionists meet to discuss politics) rushed ahead of union bureaucrats in organising strikes and demonstrations. From 1998 a recurrent theme of the labour forums was the demand for the ZCTU to form a 'labour party', a demand that was repeatedly rejected on the grounds that a union's work should be limited to 'economic' issues. However, as the crisis deepened so did the urgency of these demands (*Socialist Worker*, 1999).

Meanwhile Mugabe seemed to be failing everyone. The 'international community', which had long regarded him as a reliable partner, and Zimbabwe as proof of the efficacy of IMF and World Bank reforms, began to ostracise the regime. He caved in too easily to an audacious trade union movement, which he was expected to have subdued. Gradually various NGOs, academics, businessmen and lawyers added their voices to the calls for a new opposition. The 'demands' now carried a contradiction. On the one hand they came from below, the labour forums, radicalised students and the streets that had been involved in mass upheavals since 1996. These forces insisted on a reversal of Mugabe's policies of austerity. But on the other hand pressure was mounted by the middle class – academics, lawyers and business people who were threatened by the movement they now sought to co-opt (Bond, 2002: 87-106). At its founding rally held in Harare on September 11, 1999 (where 20,000 took part), the MDC announced that the party is:

a focused continuation of the ages-old struggle of the working people. The MDC is coming together, through a united front of the working people, to pursue common goals and principles that advance the interests of all people across Zimbabwe -

workers, peasants, the unemployed, women, students, youths and the disabled people... (quoted in Harnon, 2000).

The South African based academic, Bond, notes that within a very short time the MDC adopted many policies antipathetic to their original goals. The party courted whites and international big business, as Bond wrote at the time:

... is it not the case, as of February, that the MDC began to receive generous funding by (white) domestic and foreign capitalists, including white farmers? At that stage, didn't Zimbabwe's skewed land relations and abominable property rights simply drop off the MDC's campaign agenda? Wasn't a representative of big business put in charge of its economics desk, and wasn't his first major speech a firm endorsement of the International Monetary Fund and wholesale privatization for post-election Zimbabwe? (quoted in Harnon 2000).

Gwisai (2002b) notes how Mugabe began to realise that if he was going to survive where Kaunda and Malawi's Hastings Kamuzu Banda, both ejected by popular resistance, had not, then he must be seen to retreat from the agenda of IMF reform that he had enthusiastically defended. The regime moved quickly, and government rhetoric began to lambaste 'imperialism' and 'Western racism'. The effects of this shift helped to consolidate middle class and foreign support for a 'new party', in opposition to Mugabe's new position. ZANU-PF did not move forward in one mass. Factions in the party, principally around Eddison Zvobgo, a longstanding advocate of neo-liberal reform, became a focus of opposition in ZANU-PF, trying and ultimately failing to resist Mugabe (Saunders, 2000).

Land was key to this reorientation. For nearly 20 years the regime had failed to seriously redistribute land to the black majority starved of it. The government, which in the mid-1990s had ejected 'squatters' from occupied white farms, a few years later sanctioned the occupation by squatters of the same farms.⁶⁵ Mugabe began to realise the potential of the war veterans and used Hunzvi – 'Hitler', as he labelled himself - to win their loyalty. Before long Mugabe had outmanoeuvred the opposition in his party and won most of the regime to his new stance. The collapse in value of the Zimbabwean dollar at the end of 1998 was symbolic of what was to come – the isolation and rapid demonisation of the regime by international capital (Bond, 2001: 66-74).

⁶⁵ ZANU-PF (2002) stated that it intended to seize 8.5 million hectares of land before the presidential elections, which is the majority of land owned by white farmers. They succeeded in doing this by 2003, as the pace of land seizures and occupations came to an end.

The call for a new party was finally answered. In March 1999 the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), which was initially just a 'movement', was born through the National Working People's Convention (NWPC). The ZCTU had convened the NWPC, and invited NGOs, civic groups and residents' associations. However, the convention was not a friendly gathering, and attempts were made to exclude leading socialists. Tim Chitambure remembers:

The guys were given special instructions, "You should not allow socialists in." But you know what we did? We are the leading people in locations, so some went under the banner of residents' associations, some went under the banner of other groups in the NCA [National Constitutional Assembly] (interview 9 July 2001).

The aim for many of those present was to form a labour party committed to defending the interests of the working class, but the tension between these activists and the other participants was never far from the surface. As Chitambure recalls,

So we were saying that ZCTU should form a workers' party. But they didn't like it – they wanted to separate economics from politics ... They asked: "How come you are in here?" and you say, "I am representing Glenfield residents association." Those that did not get in were outside with some leaflets saying, "In this convention push these points" (interview 9 July 2001).

Until the organisation's official launch in September 1999, the party was dominated by trade unionists, but a middle class bloc representing local and international business interests quickly began to encroach on the leadership. In the parliamentary elections in June 2000, workers made up only 15 percent of the candidates (Alexander, 2000a). Policy also shifted, and the party courted Western leaders and committed itself in the election manifesto to policies of the free market, privatisation, foreign direct investment and land reform that succeeded in being to the right of ZANU-PF, offering only very limited redistribution to the poor.

The parliamentary vote followed the MDC victory in a referendum held in February on a draft constitution proposed by the government. The MDC almost won the parliamentary elections. For a party less than one and a half years old this was an extraordinary result. It attracted the core of the urban working class in all of the principal cities – Harare, Bulawayo and Chitungwiza. But the election also marked a

decisive shift in policy and symbolised the end of what had seemed to be the inextricable radicalisation of the struggle (*Socialist Worker*, 2001c).

Many commentators asked how the MDC could have fallen into the hands of the middle class (Harnon, 2000; Bond, 2002; Gwisai, 2000a). The answer, some maintain, is the same weakness of the organised working class observed in the 1948 general strike (Gwisai, 2002a). Although the ZCTU had jettisoned the old leadership in the late 1980s, its new leaders were still tied to Stalinist politics and an economism that maintained the congress should be limited to narrow trade union work. When the regimes in Eastern Europe and Russia collapsed, so did the ideological signposts for a generation of trade union bureaucrats, activists and leaders. This 'ideological collapse' had a profound effect on the activism of students (see section 5:4:5). At the same time there was no clear organisational or ideological force in the movement with enough influence to make sense of these events (processes that are described in more detail in chapter 7). Although the period 1996-1998 showed the power, initiative and creative force of the Zimbabwean popular forces, the strikes and demonstrations remained ultimately under the control of the trade union bureaucracy. In turn they ensured that 'stayaways' would only be used as a means to, at most, pressurise Mugabe while keeping the interests of national and international capital on board. Bond (2002) however argues that the reasons are far less elaborate, that it was the crisis of funding for the MDC in October 1999 that meant that the organization had to look beyond its natural constituency.

But there was another element to the participation of the middle class in the MDC which was tied inextricably to the struggles that had marked the late 1990s. Kasuwanga, a member of the ISO, argues that it was the threat of mass revolt that marginalised and frightened the middle class. These tensions forced them to respond to the MDC, as he explains:

The main point I want to make is that we were on the verge of a sort of revolution in Zimbabwe. There was going to be anarchy, whereby revolts were going to be happening any time, any day. So I think some interested groups, to stop this, said, "Why don't you form this NCA and later on the MDC?" ... Through ... the ZCTU calling for that dialogue thing [it] was trying to neutralise the power of workers. Because workers by then were calling [for] a five-day stayaway, the five-day stayaway was the one needed by workers. And Tsvangirai was calling for one day, two days, one day, two days, every Wednesday. It was a form of trying to control workers. If the MDC was not formed workers were going to revolt on their own.

And the middle classes were scared. Do you know what was happening? People like me, I don't have O-levels, I don't have a degree. I was even more influential in my area. Our comrades, those who were putting up the barricades in the street, were having more influence. The 'middle class' were losing influence because no one could hear them. They couldn't stand and talk to the people rioting because the language was different. But having that dialogue thing, they try to interpret all of those things to us – the rule of law, the IMF, economics, "We want foreign currency. We want this and that." They thought that they were talking to the uneducated: "You cannot understand this. Do this and do that." That is how the struggle was stolen from our hands (interview 9 July 2001).

Whether the strikes and mass struggles between 1996 and 1998 amounted to Kasuwanga's 'revolutionary situation' is highly debatable. There were never consistent political demands under an independent leadership that could have made the question of the forcible removal of Mugabe more than an issue among a minority of those active. But Kasuwanga is undoubtedly right that Zimbabwe went through a 'sort of revolution' (see Zeilig, 2002b).

Each step of the way attempts were made to stifle the independent voice of the movement. Organisations that had built solidarity, organised labour forums, set up tenants' associations, and participated in strikes and demonstrations were obstructed in their work. Despite this, Gwisai (the leading member of the ISO) won an important seat in a working class area of Harare in the 2000 parliamentary elections as part of the MDC and, despite continued opposition from the party leadership, remained in the organisation until December 2002 when it was expelled.⁶⁶ However, regardless of the avowedly Blairite stance of the party, it is the product of the popular struggles that gripped Zimbabwe.

5:2:6 Conclusion

It was the largely urban struggles from 1995 that gave birth to the MDC but it was the very weakness of these movements that led to the party's failure to resist the pull of a layer of NGO professionals, the middle class, and foreign influence and finance (Bond and Manyanya, 2002). Although it has been deflected from its founding purpose, it remains to many the crucial repository of the hope for social change of ordinary Zimbabweans.

⁶⁶ The MP was Munyaradzi Gwisai, a leading member of the ISO (See Alexander, 2000b).

Mugabe's partial withdrawal from ESAP was not a principled decision based on anti-imperialist politics, but a cynical move forced on him by a political crisis caused by popular resistance, which (as discussed in section 5:4:2 below) involved the crucial agency of university students. The reality for most Zimbabweans has been a continuation of the same policies, while the regime mouthed platitudes about 'foreign powers' and 'racist imperialism'. Unemployment now affects much more than half of the population – jobs in the 'formal' sector for new graduates and students have disappeared. The second and third parts of the chapter examine the evolution of student activism from the 1960s.

5:3 Foundations

The University of Rhodesia became an increasingly militant site for student activism in the 1960s. Students developed their nationalist politics and supported the wider struggle against the Rhodesia state from the university. Campus based organisations, in many ways, mirrored the development of nationalist politics outside the university. In the early 1970s, black students expelled by the university for leading demonstrations and organising political groups on campus, became members of a student intelligentsia that help to lead the nationalist movement in exile and the guerrilla war inside Rhodesia. This part of the chapter tracks the growth of nationalist politics during the first days of the student movement.

5:3:1 Introduction: Students, education and the University of Zimbabwe

At an important conference on the *Role of the University and its Future in Zimbabwe* held at the newly renamed University of Zimbabwe in 1981, Robert Mugabe gave the opening address. He underlined the centrality of the university to national development and quoted at length the academic Barkan:

The world of the African University student is a rarefied one, for he lives in a realm which less than one percent of his countrymen ever see. His time is monopolised by an institution, which is both physically and spiritually removed from the society which surrounds it. He attends class and resides on a campus that forms a self-contained community, segregated from the rural areas where he was raised, and

often detached from the main urban centre of his country as well. With few exceptions, the university he attends has not attempted to create its own identity and academic traditions, preferring instead to imitate those found in the land of the former colonial power. Even though his country has been independent for several years, many of his teachers continue to be white expatriates (1982: 6).

Mugabe was correct. The quotation expressed the realities for students at the one national university that existed at the time. Zimbabwe had achieved its independence the previous year and the university was an unreconstructed institution, dominated by white teaching staff and existing in a rarefied space. This space – self-contained and detached from the main urban centre – helped to determine the nature and extent of student activism in the first decade of independence (see section 4:5 above). This is not simply an historical element to student activism in Zimbabwe. The ‘rarefied spaces’ of the campus at the UZ were central to the successful mobilisation of students, and to political debate, in conditions of military repression from the late 1990s (Halliday, 1969). Steve Biko, a student activist in Harare, explains the importance of this space in the context of student mobilisation:

students have a significant part in the movement based on the fact that in Zimbabwe almost all students who go to higher institutions are at campus and so they have some togetherness and it adds some mass character to the activities of the students. Secondly in the lecture rooms and the library students are in constant interaction with ideas; it's easy for them to have ideological development, they develop faster than those who learn from concrete experiences. The students engage with ideology on an abstract level so they can quickly raise their consciousness (Interview, 16 May 2003).

But the university was ‘rarefied’ in another respect. As one student remembered, as late as the mid-1990s:

The payout was too much for me. The first thing you do when you finish your first term is to go home and show off ... with the pocket money that you had from the payout. I could afford to drink beer daily and still have \$3,000 in my pocket for the vacation. Some of us even had enough to pay for our brothers and sisters to go through school (Hopewell Gumbo, interview, 28 July 2003).

In the 1980s these payouts did not only allow students to indulge in ‘beer’ and ‘showing off’ but as many former students note, to build houses for their parents in the rural areas.⁶⁷

In the 1980s, although changing quickly, the UZ still resembled the former University of Rhodesia. The Vice Chancellor’s report in 1984 noted the total number of full-time undergraduate students had increased 2,705. As a result of recent reforms in 1983, 25 black lecturers had been appointed compared with just two in the past (University of Zimbabwe Annual Report, 1984: 3). Overall, in the first five years following independence, student enrolment at the UZ rose from 1,481 to 4,741, reaching 7,699 in 1988 (Auret, 1990: 30).

The university – the only Zimbabwean university at the time – sat at the apex of the education system, as an institution that would forge the country’s elite. However the wider educational environment had a profound effect on the status and importance of university education. Education had played a central role in determining social status and class position, a situation that long predated independence. These points are well made by Bianchini (2004) who sees the ‘diploma fetishism’ of sub-Saharan Africa linked to what he terms the ‘primitive accumulation of education capital’. This was initially a colonial process that saw the ‘forced education’ of a layer of *évolués* divorced from the mass of the population to whom they were destined to become the ‘liberators’ (a bureaucratic elite running the colonial states). The ‘accumulation of education capital’ became a central element in the post-colonial hierarchy, and competition to obtain these diplomas a vital resource in accessing political and social power. Bianchini (2004: 39-41) argues that it is only through appreciating this ‘fetishism’ that the post-colonial crisis in higher education – that has seen the successive ‘*dévalorisation*’ of these diplomas – can be understood.

These views towards education had their roots in the colonial system. Education became fetishised in proportion to its scarcity, giving those who possessed it enormous status. It

⁶⁷ As Arthur Mutambara, ex-student leader from the late 1980s recalled: “materially we never had any issues, we had disagreements here and there about payouts but by and large there was enough food. Actually it was excessive, in the Halls of Residence. We used to throw away bread. We use to call it, ‘Christmas every day’. When you go to Varsity it is Christmas every day. In the rural areas, Christmas Day would be when you had rice and chicken. But at Varsity you would have rice and chicken everyday” (Interview, 10 July 2003).

also had a peculiarly Zimbabwean twist: the incarceration of nationalist guerrillas saw the transformation of prisons into centres of learning and study, the 'prison university' that Robert Mugabe graduated from with numerous degrees (often with the help of the Rhodesia Christian Council). Those not serving prison sentences were often the recipients of foreign scholarships for African students from the breakaway colony (Tengende, 1994: 191-201). Stanley Nyamfukudza brilliantly expresses this obsession in his novel *The Non-Believer's Journey*:

For as long as Sam had known him he had been studying by correspondence courses and had managed to pass the Junior Certificate exams, five O levels and, only recently, had had his fourth attempt at an A level subject. It had become a hobby almost, failing repeatedly until he passed by virtue of mule-headed obstinacy. There was something abnormal in his generation's belief in the magic powers of education, Sam sometimes thought, verging on superstitious, almost. They had had to make incredible sacrifices to be able to go to school for a few years and they seemed, throughout their later lives, to believe that it was the lack of educational certificates, those magic papers which were supposed to open up the world for one's taking, which explained all their privations. And all this despite the fact that the streets of every town were crawling with young black people, burdened with armfuls of certificates, who could not get jobs. The magic formula had long ceased to deliver the goods, but the myth remained, unshaken by the obvious, political fact that no white man, illiterate or otherwise, had any problems finding a supervisory job. It was a wonder that young people went to school at all (Nyamfukudza, 1980: 86)

The story is about a cynical graduate from the University of Rhodesia who refuses to commit himself to the liberation war. The university's status in his narrative has another dimension: the rarefied world of university life has created an aloof and cynical generation, who look down dismissively at the society that their education has excluded them from. But the quotation expresses the social prestige of education that marks political and social discourse in Zimbabwe.⁶⁸

These two themes, the 'rarefied' life of university students and the social significance of education in Zimbabwe, will be recurrent themes in this chapter. But first a word needs to be said about the evolution of student activism. Student activism in Zimbabwe

⁶⁸ One novel, *The Swinging Graduate* (1995) by Vitalis Nyawaranda, deals specifically with the moral universe of students at the University of Zimbabwe. It describes an arrogant and promiscuous graduate at the start of the AIDS pandemic. University life is still presented as aloof and cynical, but now also as a potentially dangerous and uncontrollable space. The enormous status of the university guaranteed its continued expansion after independence.

follows a similar trajectory to other sub-Saharan Africa countries, though on a time-scale twenty years later than most (given the country's independence in 1980). This saw a period of pro-government activism in the early phase of independence, with activism limited to protesting against white minority rule in South Africa (Bianchini, 2004; Williams, 2004). This led later to a falling out of student activists with the regime, once they realised in Draper's words "that their father had lied," leading to an explosive condemnation of the regime. This transition took place during a period of state led development (see chapter 3) in the early and mid 1980s, with university students living in a high degree of luxury. Most students who managed to make it to the UZ received generous grants until the Zimbabwean government restructured university provision in 1998, which also saw the privatisation of catering services (Information Office, *University of Zimbabwe* 6 March 2005). These conditions were eroded in the early 1990s, though even by 1995 students were still relatively affluent.

The second period from 1995, marked the 'convergence of forces', as conditions at the university were further eroded and students mobilised in a politicised environment across Zimbabwe. They were no longer a 'rarefied elite' above society, but increasingly a proletarianised opposition staring at society from a similar perspective as that of everyone else. The next section discusses the role of students in Zimbabwe, as part of a student-intelligentsia that helped to lead the national liberation war and, after independence, as the first group to pierce the holy edifice of the regime. Later they continued to play – in completely altered circumstances – a politically privileged role in the frustrated transition in the late 1990s. The 'agency' of Zimbabwe university students was forged in the liberation war that was in part run and organised by university students, who saw themselves uniquely placed to bring liberation, a process that saw, according to Astrow (1983: 20-26), the marginalisation of urban trade union struggle by a petit bourgeois leadership.

5:3:3 The student-intelligentsia and national liberation: 1970-1980

The University of Rhodesia - as the University of Zimbabwe was known before it was renamed in 1980 - was never *A Non-Racial Island of Learning* as the title of a study from the 1970s described it (Gelfand, 1978). It was, on the contrary, regarded as a tense and difficult place during the liberation war in the 1960s and 1970s (Cefkin, 1975).

However in 1968 – the year of student revolt across the world - *The Rhodesia Herald* proudly announced: “Rhodesia is lucky in its University College.” Apparently there was little evidence of ‘subversive elements’, “in fact at the moment no evidence is visible at all” (quoted in Cefkin, 1975: 135). But within months of this article black and white students at the university erupted in revolt against the proposed changes to the constitution that would have postponed black majority rule indefinitely. This marked one of the first occasions at the university when European and African students came together against attempts to entrench white minority rule (Cefkin, 1975: 135).

Among black students at the university it was much more than ‘tense and difficult’. Barkan’s (1975) self-contained community, segregated from the rural and the main urban centre created a unique political and social space for activism that fed inextricably into the war that divided the racist state. It was an important centre of recruitment during the war, providing many of the military and ideological cadres for the struggle.

Student politics on the campus mirrored the wider Africa nationalist movement in the country. In August 1963 the main party of African nationalism, ZAPU, split, leading to the creation of ZANU under the leadership of Reverend Sithole, who represented a more radical approach to independence and national liberation. ZANU plunged itself into the university milieu, recruiting student activists and addressing meetings in an attempt to win political hegemony on the campus. This led to the accusation of ZANU being nothing more than a ‘party of intellectuals’ cut off from the masses (see Chung, 1995: 146 and Cefkin, 1975: 141). Yet this strategy was consistent with ZANU’s emphasis, at least in the early years of the movement, on education and the political training of militants. However, ZANU’s prescription for the student movement was very clear: students were to play an obedient role in the coming struggles, “being part of the revolutionary movement you are to ... be directed by it,” and there was no space for an “independent line” (quoted in Cefkin, 1975: 149).

For some time the campus was torn in two by an internecine struggle between ZANU and ZAPU activists that was only bought to an end by the National Union of Rhodesian Students (NURS), which played an important role in “coalescing the forces of African nationalism in campus” after the split (Cefkin, 1975: 148). NURS also managed to maintain a degree of political mobilisation after the paralysis of nationalist politics

caused by the banning of the ZANU and ZAPU in 1963. One student remembered that as the leaders of ZAPU fled the country in 1963, “The university student in that year became more conscious than ever of his role as a revolutionary” (quoted in Cefkin, 1975: 148). However the period saw the marginalisation of the urban struggle by a nationalist strategy that increasingly focused on rural guerrilla warfare led by an exiled political leadership. To a certain extent, this thrust the university and the student-intelligentsia into the centre of urban politics, with students feeling an obligation to assume the leadership of the nationalist cause.

The ‘pots and pans’ demonstration in 1973 was a high-point in the pre-independence student movement, and the key turning point in the evolution of the ‘student-intelligentsia’. Racial issues had exploded onto the campus: the main concern was the presence of a university delegation at the Association of the Commonwealth Universities in Edinburgh. Many African students regarded support for the delegation as being tantamount to accepting the racism at the university – the predominance on the University Senate and Council of Rhodesian Front supporters. Most white students, however, saw the issue differently, that the delegation should be applauded as representing the university’s multiculturalism. These issues were further heightened over the issue of the non-representation of African workers at the university, who turned to the student union to represent them. The president of the student union at the time explained that, “workers have started coming to me not because I am the right channel but because they are both frustrated and desperate” (quoted in Tengende, 1994: 141). African students occupied the principal’s office in 1973 demanding the end of racial discrimination, the employment of Africans in all fields and an increase in the wages of catering staff. This act of solidarity was not accidental, but typical of the nature of early student activism. Black students at the one national university could see themselves at once removed from the realities of the black non-academic members of staff who had approached them with their complaints and also representatives of them.

Dissatisfied with the Principal’s response on the issue of wages for African non-academic members of staff, students launched the ‘pots and pans’ demonstration, a demonstration that Tengende (1994: 141), in his seminal study of the period, describes as “the last significant confrontation between the students and the Administration and the Rhodesian state.” A crowd of students proceeded to remove tea urns and other ‘tea’

utensils and locked the property in a student union building before making their petitions to the university authorities. The identification of these utensils was not accidental; on the contrary:

I thought it was the most exquisite demonstration that had ever been invented ... [taking] all the tea equipment from every department in the university before morning tea. They rightly recognised that in our [white] society, if you don't have morning tea, it's a fate worse than death! You can be raped, you can do nothing else, but you mustn't be deprived of your morning tea! (Knottenbelt quoted in Veit-Wild, 1994: 129).

After a series of further consultations by the university Disciplinary Committee several days after the initial demonstration, a decision was made to expel a number of students. The decision inflamed student feelings. In the riot that ensued \$70,000 worth of property was destroyed. The main target of their fury was the recently built – and much hated – Senior Common Room. The university administration was also attacked and 150 students were arrested (Tengende, 1994: 142). Most pleaded guilty and many were sentenced to six months with hard labour; several others pleaded not guilty and went through a lengthy trial. After serving their sentences the students faced further penalties and were restricted from coming within 20 kilometres of the city, making their continued studies impossible. The effect of these expulsions was dramatic. Tengende (1994: 143) explains that many “escaped to neighbouring countries en route to join the liberation struggle.”

The effect of the liberation war on student consciousness at the time cannot be overestimated. The 1973 demonstration at the campus coincided with the opening of a new Zimbabwe African National Liberation Army (ZANU's military arm) north-eastern front. After years of fratricidal struggles with ZAPU, this was regarded as a turning point in war and that now – finally – liberation and independence were around the corner. Student militants and activists fed into and helped generate this renewed optimism. At the same time Rhodesian authorities intensified political repression on campus. The government had recently lowered the minimum age of conscription to 17 and it was not uncommon to see white students in military fatigues on campus. Students from rural backgrounds would also have had direct experience of the repression of the state at home: “The university was now resembling the wider Rhodesian white society – armed and defiant” (Tengende: 144). The 1973 demonstrations were the last effective

resistance at the university. The mass arrests, imprisonment and expulsion of students, together with the militarisation of the campus, effectively ruled out further open displays of resistance. The Student Representative Committee was left to impotently issue press releases that were ignored by the state media (Tengende, 1994).

It was not only university students who gave up their studies to fight in the liberation war; after 1973 secondary school students joined *en masse*, forcing at least six rural schools to close down (Mungazi, 1992: 85). One of the most prominent student leaders from the 1980s also emphasises the role high school students played in the 1970s:

they were the bedrock. Those who were in high school and who were old enough crossed from Mutambara Mission School into Mozambique, most of these ex fighters were actually high school students, who left form 4, form 6, they left the University of Zimbabwe [sic] to go to Mozambique. So the student movement has always been the basis of change in Zimbabwe, even internally ZAPU, ZANU, NDP, students were the youth movement. But the fighters, I would venture to say that the 90% of the fighters came from the colleges, high schools and the University of Rhodesia. People would leave in their first year, in their second year. People would go from St. Augustine, Mutambara ... All those fighters were students (Arthur Mutambara, interview 10 July 2003).⁶⁹

The role of university students in the guerrilla struggle was extremely important. After the 1975 assassination of Herbert Chitepo, one of the foremost guerrilla leaders, a large number of the ZANU leaders in Zambia were arrested. The leadership vacuum was filled by an energetic student-intelligentsia who had fled from the university and secondary schools in Rhodesia over the previous years. They took control of the struggle through the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA) that was a product of the merger between ZANLA and ZIPRA forces (the rival military arms of the ZANU and ZAPU) in the mid 1970s. ZIPA developed a reputation of being led by young leftist intellectuals (Saunders, 2000: 13). Fay Chung (1995), who was active in the ZANU-PF at the time, writes about how "the university intelligentsia ... who had successfully established themselves in Zambia ... found an opportunity to take a more direct role." She notes that the 'university intelligentsia' were not only students (or from Rhodesia), but also

⁶⁹ The list is indeed long: Zororo Willard Duri (former leading ZANU member), Sobusa Gula-Ndebele (a prominent lawyer), Christopher Mutsvangwa (former director general of ZBC), and John Majowe (former ambassador to Mozambique), Stan Mudenge (Minster Foreign Affairs), Witness Mangwende (senior ZANU member and government Minster), and Kempton Makamure (university lecturer): a generation that gave up their studies at the university and became the ideological and military leadership of the war.

Zimbabwean intellectuals from across Africa and the UK and the USA. “Dozens of young university graduates followed, from Britain, Sierra Leone and Rhodesia” (Chung 1995: 141). Education was at the centre of their approach, and they sought to develop coherent political training for political commissars. Groups of cadres were educated in the main tenets of Marxism-Leninism, but on an inherently egalitarian basis. Distinctions between officer/recruit were eliminated and democratic procedures were, albeit briefly, introduced. When ZANU resumed leadership of the liberation movement, this critical left-wing perspective was replaced by a ‘populist-authoritarianism’ that shunned independent thinking (Moore, 1991).

Today there is a certain amount of political capital made from these facts. The ruling party contrasts the true revolutionaries of the 1970s who came from the university with the ‘fakers’ of today. Mugabe used Zororo Willard Duri’s funeral in 1996 to attack current activists, “It was the dedication of cde [comrade] Duri’s generation that led the ZANU (PF) politburo to give him the status of a national hero ... The new generation has to emulate that spirit in the new battles facing the country” (*The Herald*, 1996a). This phenomenon is an important argument in the thesis. The role of the student-intelligentsia reflected the weaknesses of popular social forces in Zimbabwe (see chapter 3) and the exaggerated (indeed ‘fetishised’) importance of university education. These combined processes turned an extremely small layer of the population into politically privileged (and deeply contradictory) agents of social change.

The development of a pre-independence intelligentsia has been discussed in a number of important studies (Mandaza, 1980; Zvodgo, 1994; Moore, 1991). All of these authors discuss the choices and dilemmas for a group of educated Zimbabweans, which emerged from the expansion of secondary education in the 1950s and 1960s. Mandaza saw that this group wanted to rid settler society of the racial fetters to their own self-advancement, and so the principal issue was not to “raise questions about the mechanisms of exploitation. This would risk exposing their own class position in relation to the African masses” (Mandaza, 1980: 370). However, another choice – that of ‘self-denial’ – lay open to them: the intelligentsia was to immerse itself in the mass upheavals of the liberation struggle, and to perform a type of class suicide that, as we have seen (see section 3:2 above), was advocated by Cabral (1969). “Only when the

petit-bourgeoisie [sic] itself decides to sacrifice its own class interests for those of ... a socialist Zimbabwe" (Cabral, 1969: 374).

It is important to identify the weaknesses in the nationalist struggle, and in the student movement that was an adjunct of it, that marginalised the role of the urban poor and working class. In this context students at the University of Rhodesia failed to develop a clear political strategy that linked the rural revolt to an urban struggle, in the townships, factories and at the university. Student activists were ultimately paralysed by this failure, and their uncritical engagement in the nationalist movement gave them no alternative but to decamp from the university into exile and the guerrilla struggle, and not to the black townships or factories. Cefkin (1975: 157-8) explains this paralysis brilliantly in his pioneering study of the student movement in 1960s Rhodesia:

Expectation that the African townships might explode into popular rebellion rested upon fond hopes for spontaneous action: students did not undertake an analysis of the conditions under which uprisings occur. In the absence of effective nationalist organisation in the townships which could utilize campus demonstrations to touch off, spread and direct revolutionary actions the student initiative remained an isolated event of little impact within the African community.

Cefkin (1975: 158) reflects on the uncritical acceptance in the student movement of political tactics that derived directly from the nationalist leadership. The failure of student activists, he argued, to focus on bread and butter issues that could have connected more immediately to the needs of black Rhodesians, hindered the potential to build a mass movement.

5:3:4 State-privileged activism: 1980-1995

Between 1980 and 1995 there were broadly three periods of student activism. The first, a pro-government period, lasted until the anti-corruption demonstrations in 1988, with student activists still glorifying in the national liberation struggle that had recently won independence. The second, an anti-government period, was followed quickly by the 'convergence of forces' in the 1990s with the struggles against privatisation. A further period of activism emerged after 1995, with the consolidation of the ZANU elite around IMF and structural adjustment programmes and the break up of revolutionary

nationalism and the collapse of Stalinism. These three periods are discussed in turn below.

At independence student life could not have contrasted more with the rural and urban worlds students emerged from. Most students received full grants from the state, which were, until the mid-1990s, more than adequate to live on. In fact money allocated for grants increased by almost Z\$10,000,000 between 1993-1995 (Zvogbo, 1999: 164). Although there were frequent demonstrations about the late disbursement of ‘payouts’ (grants), they were regarded as generous (*The Herald*, 1995). As late as 1995 a mature student, Talkmore Saurombe, who had been teaching for years in a rural school, fulfilled a dream to go to university to upgrade his teaching diploma:

When I arrived at UZ in 1995 it was a very exciting situation because life at campus was very different from life at work. So I was excited you know, that I had come to university to help my ambition be fulfilled. You know because if I actually go back to my diploma days at college, I remember putting up a photograph of my graduation day at college, and I had this script at the bottom inscribed ‘a pipe dream unfulfilled.’ So, when I came to university it was actually the beginning of the fulfilment of that pipe dream .

Then we used to get a payout, which was a lot of money then ... to begin with it was seventeen thousand in the first year, then in my final year it went up to thirty two thousand and that was a lot of money... I know that it was something like even five times more than the salary of a diploma holding teacher at that time (Talkmore Saurombe, interview 5 June 2003).

This meant that students could sponsor other members of their family through school, send money home and socialise. In Gumbo’s words they could ‘drink beer daily’. Many students chose to illustrate this by explaining that they had enough money to eat between meals, which is perhaps more an illustration of the crisis in the university sector today than a reflection of the affluence that existed in the past. Saurombe goes on to explain: “We used to have full-course meals, you know. One could afford to get three meals a day and then it was nice. It was conducive to study. Because you had *nothing to worry about but your books*” [emphasis added]. One important element needs to be emphasised here, Saurombe describes the vital importance of diplomas (cf. Bianchini’s ‘accumulation of education capital’) and the status of the university, as the highest institution distributing these diplomas.

At the time most students were subject to a system of 75% grant and 25% loan. In the case of Saurombe who was returning to education, it was 100% loans, repayable over five years when he returned to his teaching position (Information Office, *University of Zimbabwe* 6 March 2005). The status of university students, privileged and cut off in many ways from the harsh realities of the rest of society, had profound effects on their activism. Activism combined a vanguardism – championing the cause of the poor and dispossessed – with an elitism that came from their privilege. It also meant – as student activists will tell you today – that students were not solely preoccupied with ‘bread and butter’

5:3:5 Elites and vanguards

The most notable action among students in the early 1980s was a demonstration and rioting outside the South African embassy after the death of the Mozambican president Samora Machel in 1986. However, by the late 1980s the blatant corruption of the government could no longer be ignored by the student activists (Saunders, 2000). The first anti-government demonstrations were only against certain members of the government and regarded by students as supportive of Mugabe’s own ‘anti-corruption drive’. An anti-corruption demonstration took place in September 1988 at the UZ. The demonstration – regarded as a milestone in the movement – marked an abrupt fissure in the relationship between students and the ruling party: a party that they had previously regarded as their own. The students called themselves ‘revolutionary intellectuals’ and protested in *support* of Mugabe’s drive to return the ruling party to the Leadership Code.⁷⁰ Students issued an ‘anti-corruption document’ detailing ten cases of corruption within government circles. Mugabe’s response, angrily dismissing the demonstrators who were protesting explicitly in his defence, was an abrupt and violent moment of truth for hundreds of student activists who had regarded the president as their hero. They demanded that ZANU-PF be transformed into a vanguard party before a one-party state was introduced (*The Herald*, 1988).⁷¹

⁷⁰ A document that emerged after independence committing ZANU-PF to a strict anti-corruption code.

⁷¹ The merits of a one-party state were discussed openly (see for example, Mandaza and Sachikonye 1991). But in the case of the support for the ‘one party state’ by student radicals at the university, it was connected not to a contemporary notion of ‘dictatorship’, but the party as the embodiment of progressive ideas that would bring about political transformation. In this respect Kriger (2005) is wrong to express astonishment at the fashionable ideas of one-party state in the 1980s.

The leadership of the Student Representative Council (SRC) at the university at the time was heavily influenced by socialist politics. The president of the SRC, Arthur Mutambara – whose period at UZ is now eulogised as the ‘AGO era’⁷² – recalls how the leadership would regularly visit the East German, Russian and Chinese embassies: “I read *Das Kapital* in my first year. We used to go to the Soviet Embassy to get books, from the Cuba Embassy, and I had lots and lots of books and I read and read and read. So to me the first year at varsity was about politics” (Interview 10 July 2003).

The period was marked by ideological debates – centred on questions of Marxism. Another student from the 1990s argued that “We were all dialectical materialists” (Brian Kagoro, interview 23 June 2003). The campus was not limited to ideological debate; there was a thriving social scene. The theatre company *Zambuko Izibuko* was an important component (Mutape, 1999). It staged political drama often on regional themes, the struggle in Mozambique and the battle against the apartheid regime.⁷³ Mutambara describes the thriving cultural scene at the university:

another reason for our success was being able to combine a very good social programme with a good political programme. Which meant that people would come to our political events because they were satisfied. We had cultural galas, we had bands, we had alcohol, although I didn’t drink I would provide it (Interview 10 July 2003).

This illustrates the role of ‘ideological resources’ in the student movement, and how the student agency manipulated these ideas in the SRC. These processes informed and motivated their social and political mobilisations. But these ‘ideas’ were not ‘free-floating’ but connected inextricably to an inherited political and social context that promulgated a Stalinised form of Marxism.

⁷² ‘AGO’ refers to the initials of Arthur Mutambara. Later generations of student activists describe the importance of the ‘AGO’ period. Steve Biko makes his influence clear: “When I was in my form 1 in Goromonzi High School we used to read about student leaders. I remember that’s when I heard the name Arthur Mutambara ... he became a legend because of how the UZ had organised political demonstrations in which even leading ZCTU leaders had participated ... and how one day such people will form a movement that will destroy the state” (Interview 16 May 2003).

⁷³ See Benson Mutape’s (1999) extraordinary three volume collection of life at the university. The first volume deals with the first ten years at the University of Zimbabwe and focuses on the vibrant social and cultural life at the university. Mutape has been an eyewitness at the university for more than 20 years, first as a student and then librarian. Unfortunately the collection has not been catalogued at the library, and is unpublished. I have been attempting to transfer the volumes to SOAS, currently without success. They resemble an elaborate and detailed ‘scrap-book’ of life at UZ.

By the late 1980s, students at the university were beginning to break with the government, opening up the second period of their activism: a process that saw their transformation from Mugabe's 'committed revolutionaries' to an irritating oppositional force. The success of this period of student activism was linked to the changing relationship with the regime. First, it was a turning point for the regime and its attempts to impose a one party state, an idea that was initially supported by students who, in the process of their activism over two years between 1988-9, saw the reality of the state that they defended. Mutambara identifies this element as the key reason why:

people are so keen on our period ... we were the first people, we have been vindicated. We looked very radical and extremist but everyone is doing it now ... We were the first people to draw the guns and shoot from the hip (Interview 10 July 2003).

But Mutambara disguises the pain and loss felt by his generation of activists at the betrayal by the government. This sense of betrayal explains the explosiveness of their subsequent action (declaring shortly after the demonstration in 1988 that the regime could be compared with apartheid South Africa). The student movement managed to lead the assault on the government, heralding a new and uneasy period of opposition and resistance in civil society (Bond and Manyanya, 2002).⁷⁴

5:3:6 Economic Structural Adjustment Programme and the collapse of the Berlin Wall

The trauma at the collapse of Stalinism was felt heavily across Zimbabwe's political scene. University professors who had educated a generation in a version of Stalinised Marxism were left without their ideological moorings.⁷⁵ The collapse coincided with the introduction of the ESAP in 1991, a wide-ranging programme of economic reform promoted by the World Bank and IMF. The sacred cow of university funding would be tackled through a policy of 'cost recovery' (see section 4:4 above). The real causalities in the first five years of ESAP reform were primary and secondary education. The

⁷⁴ The ZCTU supported the student action, and the Secretary General Morgan Tsvangirai was imprisoned for issuing a statement condemning the arrest of the Student Union leadership in October 1989 (see Saunders 2000: 59-63).

⁷⁵ Three of the most important Marxists at the University of Zimbabwe were Shadreck Gutto, Kempton Makamure (both in the Law Faculty) and Robert McLaren (Department of Drama, and the initiator of *Zambuko Izibuko*).

introduction of a new fee structure after the 1991 Education Amendment Bill, amended the 1987 Education Act, which had provided the legal basis of free education. Real expenditure on primary education fell by 11.3 percent in 1992/3, and between 1991 and 1993 secondary school enrolment fell by ten percent (Zvobgo, 1999: 148-152). Between 1993 to 1994 and 1994 to 1995 funding for tertiary education increased by Z\$74,605,000, with expenditure on the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) and the UZ representing approximately 80% of the total (Zvobgo, 1999: 164). The withdrawal of grants and subsidised, university-run facilities would occur later in the decade.

This third period of activism, many claim, marked a decisive break with an earlier and more political period of activism. Where previously students had fought corruption now they sought only to see increases in their payouts, and a crude 'economism' came to dominate student politics.⁷⁶ The reality is not so neat. The literature tends to romanticise earlier periods of activism – as do ex-activists (see chapter 4). The 1980s is a case in point. That decade is seen by Mutambara as marking a period of untarnished political struggle at the university. In fact, the 1987 SRC executive emerged as a reaction to a campus divided ethnically – reflecting the civil war being fought against 'dissidents' in Matabeleland – and riven by 'hooliganism', that affected all forms of political activism on campus.⁷⁷ This 'indiscipline' (Tengende, 1994: 236-45) continued through the late 1980s and was reflected to a certain extent in the language used on campus. *Nose-brigades* was a derogatory term used to describe students from formally white only Group A schools, who were regarded as speaking 'through their noses'. The linguistic retaliation was similarly class bound and the *Nose-brigades* responded by calling 'rural' students 'SRBs' (Strong Rural Background).⁷⁸

These issues are central to the way that 'student mobilisation' is viewed in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. The literature on student movements (see chapter 4) tends to make use of a false dichotomy that divides the student movement into distinct periods

⁷⁶ The 'many' referred to are principally an older generation of activists who attempt to valorise their period of activism with the 'evident' degeneration of the student movement today (personal communications with Gwisai and Mutumbara, 2003).

⁷⁷ A number of students supported the University Amendment Act in 1990 in reaction to the 'indiscipline' on campus (students interviews in *The Herald*, 1991), even though it was widely condemned by the student movement.

⁷⁸ Neither of these terms are used on the campus today.

of activism. According to this categorisation the early post-independence years coincided with a period of political mobilisation (and it is no accident that the period coincided also with the student activism of the authors who often make these arguments), unaffected by the crude economism (and ‘hooliganism’) of students today (see Bathily *et al*, 1995). The example of Zimbabwe points to a much messier reality. As Tengende (1994) documents, the 1980s were replete with moments of ‘indiscipline’ and political action; similarly the late 1990s, purportedly representing a degenerative collapse into daily ‘corporatism’, abound with moments of ‘high’ politics (see Chapter 7).

Students continued to make explicitly political demands: the high point in this period perhaps was their involvement in the anti-police brutality demonstration in October 1995 and the anti-racist campaigns of the student union in the early 1990s. This also saw the emergence of the ISO (that had previously existed as a study circle at the university) onto the public arena. The ISO would continue to play a vital role in the formation of student activists, attempting to fill the ideological vacuum that had been left by the collapse of the Stalinist left (Gwisai, 2002b).

Brian Kagoro, a leading activist at UZ at the time, describes the convergence of ‘economic’ struggles – against the privatisation of student services dictated by ESAP – and ‘political’ ones, very much in the mould of the AGO era:

... we moved to the anti-racism campaigns, that’s ’93, ’94, and then later on to the anti-police brutality campaigns. The mid-nineties were really around the student welfare issues particularly, because of the privatisation that took place within the university system from ’94 onwards.

Kagoro also points to the contradiction that was at the heart of structural adjustment, seeing it as a process that unevenly gave birth to the opposition at the end of the decade:

I think the contradiction of the structural adjustment programme was that whilst it presented political liberalisation or appeared to for the rest of the country, it also killed the whole ethos of liberation, within student and worker struggles. And the focus was around issues of welfare ... they took ideology out of the [equation] ... [and now it was] how much are we getting by way of stipends. Equally if workers got a sufficient pay rise then there was no motivation to engage. And that informs why it took so long between the mid-nineties and the late nineties for the emergence

of opposition politics and also the nature and form in which that opposition politics emerged.

I think we have got to keep in mind that it was largely the same worker leadership and former student leaders who formed that opposition movement. If you read the founding documents, the intention is to make it a social democratic movement. And the triumph of neo-liberalism was such that there was a shame with which many regarded the old enthusiasm for the left. People consistently wanted to be seen as left of centre, but not sufficiently left to be called commies. So in a sense you try to sanitise ideological issues. People would easily engage with human rights questions devoid of politics ... progressively student unionism was reduced to student demonstrations and reduced to which students could hold off the establishment and for how long (Interview 23 June, 2003).

However, though this was a period full of contradictions, student activism was still dominated by the politics of the left. These years saw the consolidation of the ruling elite, the (painful) exclusion of students from it, and the dramatic collapse of Stalinism. However a new critique (and form of activism) began to emerge, at once powerfully critical of the regime, yet weakened by wider political and economic changes affecting every level of Zimbabwean society. Kagoro again makes this point extremely well:

The issues were around class analysis to start off with. We are very much dialectical materialists and we saw an obscene accumulation of wealth by the political elite under the guise of people empowerment. And so the first critique was around issues of integrity ... Whilst the rest of the country lived in abject poverty, you had an emergent class which was not based on production. It was not based on manufacturing, they were simply making money out of political positions and their children also were not being brought to local institutions. Their children were being shipped off overseas on some scholarships. So you saw a progressive privatisation of the state. So in a sense most of us felt locked out of the independent Zimbabwe that our fathers had fought for. ... You can't still place whether it was out of bitterness or out of just a sense of exclusion. We were not recognised. We are not recognised as citizens because our parents were not amongst the political elite. So in a sense you could treat us like trash ... because we were not ministers' children. So the degeneration that occurred in the institutions, the degeneration that occurred within the fabric of academic offering at the university is something that we viewed with scepticism. We saw it as a conspiracy by the neo-political elite (Interview, 23 June 2003).

Students took on what they described as the 'unrattled Rhodesian' establishment that had formed a *de facto* alliance with the obscene accumulation of the black political elite. As Kagoro explains:

[you] had this totally undisturbed, unperturbed privilege of the former elite and what seemed to be an organic or strategic alliance between the two elites. The emergent black elite and what we often referred to as the conspiracy of silence because they were beneficiaries (Interview, 23 June 2003).

Students highlighted cases where government ministers became the owners of commercial farms, donated by their white counterparts. Connected to these protests was the identification of the university establishment and the police force as the pillars of strength for the establishment. The 1995 demonstration in Harare was something of a watershed: “You will see at the anti-police brutality demonstration people demanding the resignation of the commissioner because a street vendor had been shot” (Kasuwanga, interview 9 July 2001). The demonstration saw the crucial convergence of student and popular protest, and it opened up a new period of activism among students and in wider society after 1995 (Saunders, 2000:71). Indeed the protest supports one of the arguments of the thesis about the importance of organisational leadership. It was organised by student activists at the UZ, and specifically members of the ISO. It marked the ‘convergence of forces’ that was a familiar feature across the ‘transitions’ in sub-Saharan Africa, but highlighted the specific role of students in bringing about this juncture. Biko makes the point in relation to Zimbabwe:

the character of a student in Zimbabwe is such that whenever there is a movement, it is the students that act first, they act as that spark to the powder keg ... it is the role of students to act first, to act as torchbearers ... to instigate action (Interview 16 May 2003).

5:3:7 New activism: ‘more sadza’

The period was replete with contradictions, with many seeing student activism degenerate into crude hooliganism (an off-shoot of the economism forced on students by structural adjustment) (O’Brien, 1996). These were contradictions that characterised even the ‘high activism’ of the ‘AGO’ period. In an event that was seen by many to represent conclusive evidence of the degeneration of the student movement, students were arrested for raiding dining halls at the UZ and urinating in freezers. The event occurred in April 1996 and the uproar – reported as headline news for several days – even led to one Zimbabwean in the US to write that internationally “all Zimbabweans

have been tarnished by the incident of April last year” (UZ SRC, 1997).⁷⁹ The ruling party also capitalised on the incident to condemn the new generation of activists. Typically Mugabe led the assault. *The Herald* on the 25 April reported a speech the president gave days after the events at UZ: “President Mugabe castigated the so-called ‘warlords’⁸⁰ now emerging at the UZ whom he said called themselves revolutionaries but who fought for nothing more than more sadza and more allowances.” Mugabe argued that the current generation of students betrayed the ‘true revolutionaries’ who had emerged from the same institution during the 1970s.

Student representatives condemned the ‘action’ and former student leaders set up an organisation called University of Zimbabwe Former Student Leaders to liaise with the authorities and disaffected students. On the 26 April *The Herald* reported:

The association ... held its first meeting recently ... The association shall seek to provide an on-going relationship with the university on a variety of issues, providing advice with a view to ensuring the existence of dialogue to curb unnecessary disruption of normal university activities and internal decay.

The following section describes the specific role of student activism in the period immediately before and after the formation of the MDC. This period combined the so-called ‘high politics’ of an earlier activism with the lows of a ‘daily corporatism.’ However students were the crucial “spark to the powder keg” in an era characterised by the ‘reconvergence’ of social forces (Steve Biko, interview 16 May 2003).

5:4: Transitions

The period after 1995 marked the sharp convergence of student and popular struggles in urban Zimbabwe. Students were no longer lone-activists fighting on behalf of a voiceless civil society. They became intimately involved in a tumultuous period of strikes, demonstrations and political arguments about an alternative to the ruling party.

⁷⁹It is interesting how the story of students urinating into freezers has entered the national conscience; people will repeat the story today (2003) or claim that it happened last year. It is still seen as conclusive proof of the degeneration of student behaviour, in much the same way as the ‘indiscipline’ of students was presented as incontrovertible proof of their degeneration in the 1980s.

⁸⁰This is the alias of Lawrence Chakaredza, a former activist at the university, who believed that he was a descendant of Chief Monomatapa, one of the founders of Great Zimbabwe.

This part of the chapter charts the convergence of student activism with the wider movement for democratic and social change across Zimbabwe.

5:4:1 Resistance in civic society and student activism: 1995-2003

From 1995, under the impact of structural adjustment, Zimbabwe entered a period of deepening social crisis and prolonged revolt. A key study describes the period well:

the urban masses have waged massive struggles that have shaken to the roots not only the post-colonial authoritarian state, but also the vicious neo-liberal paradigm imposed by our rulers ... The struggles have gone further than most in challenging one of the continent's most entrenched and violent ruling classes (Gwisai, 2002b: 50).

The anti-police brutality riot and demonstration was a key moment in student mobilisation, bringing students and the 'popular forces' together on a large scale for the first time (the demonstration was organised by ISO militants at the university). But it also marked a new period of activism that led eventually to the political transitions in the late 1990s. The main national university, the UZ, had also changed during this period. There was an increase in student numbers from 2,240 in 1980 to 9,300 in 1990 and to 10,139 in 2001 (Information Office, University of Zimbabwe, 6 March 2005).

5:4:2 Students feed into resistance: 'the convergence of forces'

The 'rarefied' existence of students was beginning to break down. Students were plunged into conditions at the university far removed from those previously experienced. Deepening privatisation – under a new programme for structural adjustment, Zimbabwe Policy Reforms for Social and Economic Transformation (ZIMPREST) introduced in 1996 – meant that students faced hardships a world away from the 'heaven on earth' that Kagoro experienced in the early 1990s. New government thinking about tertiary education was expressed by Mugabe during the opening of parliament in 1997, when he introduced the second phase of the Economic Reform Programme (ZIMPREST) "It seeks to stabilise the macro-economic environment ... enhance competition, promote equity in the distribution of income and wealth and bring about further reform of the

Civil Service, parastatals and the financial sector” (Parliamentary Debates, 1997: 2). The country’s institutions of higher education would never be the same again.

Battles were now fought at the university over what was commonly known as ‘ESAP 2’, the attempts to introduce 50 percent grants and 50 percent loans in 1997, and privatisation of catering and accommodation services at the university in 1998. The government moved to scrap grants, Mugabe explaining in 1997: “The funding of higher education programmes will continue to take cognisance of equitable distribution of limited resources. It is now Government policy that students are expected to contribute a proportion towards their education through payment of fees, although care will be taken not to prejudice students from poor families” (Parliamentary Debates, 1997: 12-13). These ‘cost-recovery’ measures led to the government requiring students, in the words of Rungano Zvobgo (1999: 164) to “provide 50% of their university education costs.” Kagoro describes the convergence of student hardship during this period with wider social disaffection and rebellion:

the establishment came up with a more drastic ESAP 2. So [you saw] the alienation of labour from a possibility of a settlement or accommodation within social contract debates or discussions, and progressively as you moved from ‘95, ‘96, ‘97 the rapidity with which the university privatised essentially meant that you no longer had student discontent, you had an outright student rebellion on your hands. You had the most violent demonstrations during the ‘96 , ‘97, ‘98 period and so curiously you then had a third thing that happened during that period, the prices for almost everything were liberalised: the fuel price, everything just shot up. The largest number of redundancies were created there, so you now had students supporting their parents on their student stipends which were not enough. Because their parents had been laid off work. So in a sense as poverty increases you have a *reconvergence of these forces*. And the critique started off really being around issues of socio-economic justice. Right to a living wage you know, the students started couching their demands around the right to livelihood (Interview, 23 June 2003).

The effects of ESAP were profound on government thinking, and specifically the way they intended to off-set student resistance. University students were recast to fit the new policy paradigm as ‘spoilt and privileged’ and needing to show respect for their education (Kagoro, interview 23 June 2003). As early as 1992 the government considered reviving an earlier project of national service. It was cast explicitly within the new framework, as Brigadier Mutambara – charged with assessing the feasibility of such a scheme – explained:

the government pays most of the expenses of students going onto universities and other forms of advanced training. This practice may have to be discontinued however because of the economic situation. To gain these education benefits in the future, it may be necessary to do a period of National Service. Students may have to work on community programs during their holidays and when they obtain their degrees, may spend a period as National Service cadre where they train new recruits (Mutambara, 1992).

Although the regime returned to the scheme under very different circumstances in 2001, it was the political dispensation instigated by ESAP and neo-liberal reforms that first resuscitated the idea of national service.⁸¹ It is interesting to note that these changes occurred at the same time as an expansion of tertiary education, so by 2000 several new universities had opened, including the Great Zimbabwe University in Masvingo, Gweru University College and Africa University near Mutare, in eastern Zimbabwe. There was also a policy of devolving certain degree programmes to teacher and technical colleges (Zvobgo, 1999: 157-164).

5:4:3 Formation of the opposition

From 1998 students made another decisive break with the government. After what some students claim was the reformation of the national union – ZINASU – in 1997, that was intended to mark a period of detente with the government, students again began to raise explicitly political demands.⁸² Questions of the ‘payout’, traditionally a spark for student activism were relegated, and in their place student leaders argued that only by building a political movement would the government respect the right to free education.

On 4 June 1998 the UZ was closed for almost five months after a period of intense activity over the late disbursement of the payout. However, former student leaders cite the influence of the revolution taking place in Indonesia that toppled the premier, Suharto, widely regarded as a student revolt (Fermont, 1998: 18-24). Nelson Chamisa

⁸¹ ZANU Youth Brigades are also not a contemporary phenomenon in Zimbabwe. On the contrary, they were used continually in the 1980s, particularly as the student body broke with the government in the latter part of the decades. The regime increasingly used loyal party ‘youths’ organised in party structures to physically defend the ruling party. At the ZCTU May Day celebrations in 1990 students who had turned up with critical banners were beaten and chased out of Rufaro stadium by ZANU youths (SRC, 2 May 1990).

⁸² Brian Kagoro is scathing about the idea that the national union was ‘formed’ in 1997, arguing that this is simply an attempt by former student leaders to paint themselves in a more favourable light.

remembers songs on demonstrations at the time that made the link with the Indonesian revolution explicit:

Suharto aenda nengoro yemoto, Kana uchienda kuenda tanga wadhingura Mugabe [Suharto has gone, he has been overthrown with fire. If you also want to move forward, you must first remove Mugabe]. So the motivation was that students were becoming the vanguard of the struggle. You must know that students usually have this microcosmic approach to issues, they deal with campus issues, like payouts ... but on this one we were trying to nationalise the student agenda, to also be of consequential meaning to a broader body politics in the country (Interview 8 August 2003).

After the university resumed classes political activity continued. One important student activist at the time, Jethro Mpfu, a Ndebele student from Bulawayo who refused to hold office, remembers a crucial meeting with the ZCTU at the university:

There was a deliberate effort on the part of students to forge an alliance with the workers' movement. So in my own humble judgements I'd say that the MDC was born out of the political efforts of the students at that time. I remember students encouraging ZCTU to take political action against the government.

There was a public meeting at the Lecture Theatre 400 at the UZ in 1998 where Morgan Tsvangirai attended and students were urging him to go on and form a political party and he was very reluctant ... I put it to him that "I urge you Morgan Tsvangirai to help our hard working parents by leading them in the struggle against this government. You need to represent them and be fearless because all of us will be behind you," and I'm sure he remembers that very well. I remember that picture very well, I think I have a written script somewhere about it, and I'm flattered that somebody remembers (Interview, 23 May 2003).

Student activists are not always the best judges of their historical role. When asked about what contributions students played in the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change, many state that they were *the* central element to its successful emergence. Tinashe Chimedza, the former General Secretary (2001/2) of the national student body, ZINASU, perhaps exaggerates the role of students, although the dissolving (or merging) of student structures into the new movement was undoubtedly the case:

... the first structures to be set up by MDC were set up by ZCTU leaders and ZINASU leaders all over the country: Nelson Chamisa, the Tendai Bitis, the Maxwell Saungwema, Takura Zhangazha. All those former Students Union leaders who were then in ZINASU went over the country with ZCTU leaders setting up structures, and when the MDC did not have youth wings it was the students who

were MDC Youth Wings. The first toyi-toying to be made, it was the students who toyi-toyed and raised the banners, it was the students who went into the high density suburbs to help setting up the structures. In my view it is almost impossible for any history of the MDC to forget the inputs made up by the students. We talk about MDC National Youth Chairperson,⁸³ know the reason why he was expelled for life from Harare Technical College where he was studying was because he was called an MDC activist, that's why he was kicked out of Harare Poly ... So in my view it is very, very unfortunate that anyone who decides to write the history of MDC can forget about the contribution of the Student Union (Interview, 27 May 2003).

But there is more ambiguity about the contribution of students to the MDC than Chimedza suggests. In February 1999 the Working People's Convention (WPC) was held to discuss the possibility of establishing a political movement in Zimbabwe. It grouped together students, trade unions and NGOs. Student leader and ZINASU President in 1998, Hopewell Gumbo,⁸⁴ described the difficulties of raising purely political issues:

In our day in 1998 we had a serious fight with students who said, "Why are we bothering with politics and not dealing with bread and butter?" Mutambara's period gave us confidence to criticise and take on the government. I was on a team that was moving around the country during the report back from the WPC. It was comprised of myself, Job Sakhala from ZINASU and others from the ZCTU. What we'd do is arrive in a town – we were visiting the district centres of the country – and contact every college SRC and trade union branch and invite them to a stipulated meeting that evening or later. Then at the meeting we'd explain the outcome of the WPC and set up a steering committee for the Movement for Democratic Change. These meetings were meant to generate feed-back of what people felt of the WPC. Morgan was resistant, he did not want a party (or at least that is what he said) but the mood on the ground was so great. The groundswell was so great (Interview, 28 July 2003).

These are important points. Firstly they corroborate Chimedza's description of the role of the student movement during this period and reinforce Jethro's arguments that cast Morgan Tsvangirai as a reluctant god-father to the MDC. What was the relationship between the ZCTU and ZINASU? Gumbo is clear about the relationship in the months after the WPC:

⁸³ Not only is Chamisa only 27 years old (2005) but he also proclaims it regularly, highlighting the MDC's 'youthfulness' in relation to the ruling party's gerontocracy. Often the argument was advanced to me that the opposition will simply 'out youth' the government.

⁸⁴ Nelson Chamisa credits Hopewell very highly: "of course Hopewell as the president of the student movement, who had a Marxist understanding of issues, his ideological drive was very important to the student movement.." Hopewell is a leading member of the ISO.

Our bases were the ZCTU. While we as students were clear that the WPC was a movement of the ZCTU and ZINASU there was no reciprocal respect that students were equals. They considered that we could toyi-toyi and mobilise, although the senior leadership gave us respect (Interview, 28 July 2003).

While this was an intensely political period for students it was also influenced by the ‘meat and sadza’ politics that had permeated student activism. Former students complain about their failure to organise ideologically in universities and colleges, as Gumbo illustrates: “We had no strategy to enter the movement and seek to make a serious difference. Our participation was then limited from being an ideological engine to being foot-soldiers in the emergent party” (Gumbo, interview, 28 July 2003)

However, it is important not to misjudge the connection between workers and students. The 1990s had seen a convergence of their demands, both groups having suffered from the hammer blows of ESAP. On a daily basis students worked intimately with the trade union movement. Many student leaders were not even able to attend the WPC due to a wave of student demonstrations, but still the message that students conveyed to those demonstrations drew explicitly on events that were taking place at the WPC in Harare. Gumbo remembers the message given to student protesters:

that while you are in the streets, the WPC is discussing these issues in Harare. In Bulawayo at the time students put money in a hat to hire a cab to drive a regional chairman of the ZCTU [Milton Gwetu] to address them and brief them on the progress of the WPC that was taking place (Interview, 28 July 2003).

During this period students recognised that their activism became absorbed by the new political formation. John Bomba – the SRC president at the NUST in Bulawayo for 2001/2 – describes how the traditional student greeting, ‘Ahoy comrades’ became ‘Chinja Miatiro’ [Change your ways], the MDC political slogan (Interview, 30 July 2003).⁸⁵ As Chimedza explained, the student movement became the MDC’s youth structure.

⁸⁵ Hopewell Gumbo relates how this slogan itself was generated from the grass roots consultations that took place in 1999 after the Working People’s Convention. Gumbo argues that the slogan came from an old man attending one of the report back meetings in Masvingo (28 July 2003).

5:4:4 Voting, students and the MDC

The year 2000 can be seen as the high-point of the MDC's political fortune. The party, together with the National Constitutional Assembly, campaigned for a 'no' vote in the constitutional referendum that year. Again students were reputedly an important element in the campaign teams, at university and national level. Student leader John Bomba characterised the MDC during the period as "the lion that roared in '99 almost defeating ZANU-PF in the 2000 elections" (Interview, 18 January 2005). The effect of the constitutional vote – victorious for the 'no' campaign – had a dramatic effect on the ruling party: "it woke the giant" as the MP Job Sikhala puts it and accelerated a transformation of the country that had not been experienced since independence (Interview, 31 July 2003). The MDC assumed that it would achieve a similar victory in the parliamentary elections several months afterwards, and some activists talked about a mood of complacency that infected the party.

The government returned to the dormant concept of national service and launched the National Youth Service (NYS). In 2001 the first camp was opened, named after the government minister who initiated the training, Border Gezi. This was an attempt to politicise sections of unemployed and rural youths and should be seen as only one part of the attempt by the regime to construct a social base to confront the emergent opposition movement. The war veterans and peasantry – politicised around the question of land – were the praetorian guards of this policy, but youth became a crucial third element of ZANU's social base (Kriger, 2005).

There is, however, a danger of regarding these processes as entirely new. In reality there was a remarkable degree of continuity with pre- and post-election violence. Kriger (2005: 2) showed that: "Organised violence and intimidation of the opposition ... has been a recurrent strategy of the ruling party before, during and often after elections." This violence, often justified as legitimate punishment against those audacious enough to vote for the opposition, has also frequently been instigated by a politicised youth: "leaders mobilised unemployed youth, mostly males, and sometimes women to attack supporters and their property" (Kriger 2005: 31). However, in highlighting the continuity in these practices, Kriger (2005: 31-33) loses sight of the vital break in

Zimbabwean politics with the formation, and electoral success, of the MDC and the distinct ways that youth were mobilised.

5:4:5 Unravelling the resistance

The central element in the democratic transition in Zimbabwe is that it was *frustrated*. It did not happen. Student leaders, who had argued on campus, at demonstrations and in political meetings, that their issues could only be answered with the formation of a nation-wide political movement, faced serious problems. Not only did the transition that they had sought not come, the opposite occurred; ZANU regained the initiative. The regime was assisted by the neo-liberal reorientation of the MDC (see Bond and Manyanya, 2002). This expressed a central paradox of the movement: the MDC had emerged from the resistance to privatisation and neo-liberal policies but rapidly came to advocate the same structural adjustment that their activists had eschewed. The student movement is a case in point. Its political activism in the mid-1990s was predicated on hostility to neo-liberalism. Kagoro explains:

The critical analysis ... done by some of our able minds in the students' union especially the information department within our SRC, consistently pointed to the structural adjustment programme. That was the same critique that labour had given and also contained in the alternative to ESAP document [*Beyond ESAP*, published by ZCTU in 1996]. So in a sense everybody identified privatisation and in particular ESAP as the problem.

The 'crisis', as it became known in Zimbabwe, unravelled the resistance movement that gave birth to the MDC. Student activism suffered greatly from this process. Students, however, continued to fight the effects of the privatisation of education in 2001/2, at the same time as the MDC – the party that they had given themselves over to – was advocating further privatisation. John Bomba who was a prominent student leader and member of the ISO, describes the formation of Students Against Privatisation (SAP), which was set up to lead the 'war' against privatisation and to provide students with an ideological framework through which to see their activism.⁸⁶ Bomba gives an excellent description of the tensions at the time:

⁸⁶ SAP was an initiative of the ISO although many activists who set up SAP structures in colleges and universities are still unaware of the initiative's origin; it rapidly assumed a student identity independent of the ISO (*Socialist Worker*, 2001b)

We thought for students to be proper combatants, to be really effective combatants in this battle, they were supposed to be people with a proper understanding of what privatisation was. The student movement at a national level did not have an educational policy at all, it did not have any educational policy on any specific issues it was just a question of saying: “Thursday it’s a demonstration and people, we want our payout.” You will find very reactionary arguments, we want payouts because we are good at school, we are academically up to it so we deserve a payout ... they are not proper ideological arguments to say: no, no this is a right, the provision of education is a right to us. It is the government’s task to provide health, education things like that, social services, but some would say: “No I deserve a payout because I am good at school. *I am not like those who fell out at form.*” So Students Against Privatisation was built in an attempt to fill in the gap – the failure to properly grasp the ideological forces that were underlying the activities that we were carrying out, and also building up cadres that were ready to carry out national programmes [emphasis added].

I remember when we were launching SAP we were moving around, it was a time [2001] of massive student struggles against privatisation led by myself and Tinashe [Chimedza]. We led an invasion of the Ministry of Higher Education in Harare. It was after parliamentary elections. The people we went with there were people who were linked up through the SAP programme. It is actually the programme that brought us in touch with comrades such as Biko [executive member of ZINASU 2003 and ISO member]. We distributed a lot of pamphlets, literature asking the question: What is privatisation? We did a bit of writing here and there. That was the dream that we had then to say we have to develop students who have the proper ideological understanding of what is taking place and students who are ready to act. That’s the way to build a full student combatant (Interview, 22 May 2003).

These initiatives should be seen in the context of the ISO attempting to fill the ideological vacuum left by Stalinism, through advocating a clear anti-neo-liberalism that challenges both the government and the new opposition. We can see that students, as privileged political actors in Zimbabwe, were consciously involved in using and constructing ‘ideological tools’ to effect political change.

From 1998 privatisation of campus facilities continued unabated. The UZ stopped providing catering services in 1998 after the accommodation and catering departments were dissolved, meaning that students now depended on private caterers (*The Daily Mirror*, 18 August 2004). This led to the wave of protests in 1998, and the subsequent closure of the university. In 2000 the government launched a project of ‘cost-sharing’ associated with its Millennium Economic Recovery Programme, which in practice saw tuition fees at state universities increase as much as thirty fold, and a further spate of

privatisation of student facilities. The government claimed that even with these increases, fees were still heavily subsidised, and to cushion the blow it would negotiate with private banks for a student loan facility for poor students (*The Herald*, 2001b). Students did not believe these assurances (*Socialist Worker*, 2001b). From April 2001 (continuing until 2002), under the leadership of ZINASU, there were student protests in almost every university and college across the country in an attempt to resist the extension of loans, fee increases and privatisation (*Socialist Worker*, 2002).

In one of the early protests involving students from Harare Institute of Technology (HIT) and Belvedere Teachers' Training College (BTTC), the secretary general of ZINASU, Chimedza, explained the motivation of the demonstrators "to correctly inform the country that the students of Zimbabwe are against the privatisation process" (*The Daily News*, 2001b). The opposition *Daily News* described how the government's reaction was to "unleash its trigger happy police force to bludgeon the students into silence" (2001c). And 'bludgeon' the police did. The worst violence came in early April when Batanai Hadzizi was attacked and killed by seven riot police following a demonstration at the UZ (*The Daily News*, 2001a). In the proceeding months leading student activists in SRCs across the country were arrested, tortured and expelled. Twenty students were rounded up in the middle of the night from Mutare Technical College in June, after rioting in the city against the hike in fees for purchasing training material (*The Star*, Zimbabwe, 2001). On 4 July *The Daily News* reported that 60 students from Masvingo Technical College had been arrested after battles with the riot police against the 'development levy' (a poll tax on students at the college). The same pattern was followed in almost every college. In October the High Court upheld the suspension of the leadership of ZINASU from UZ (*The Daily News*, 2001e).⁸⁷

There are two important aspects of this rebellion that need to be highlighted. The first is one of the central themes of the thesis: the question of ideological argument and organisation within the student movement. As Chimedza explained, the protests were explicitly fought against privatisation, and one of the political engines in the student

⁸⁷ Student leaders in ZINASU were frequently being picked up and tortured, often from their campus rooms in the night. The Information and Publicity Secretary, Phillip Pasirayi, temporarily 'disappeared' after being arrested in the middle of the night from the UZ, only to appear days later in Avondale Police Station (*The Daily News*, 2001f), a tactic that was used frequently by the police in Rhodesia (see Cefkin, 1975: 154).

movement at the time was the recently formed SAP, described by Bomba above. This organisation was an initiative of the ISO, which had been campaigning against privatisation for years (see *Socialist Worker*, 2001b). SAP (and more explicitly the ISO) helped to give the rebellion an ideological head. Leading members of ZINASU – who often regarded themselves (loosely), as members of the ISO – were supportive of the initiative, eventually seeing it as their own creation. The existence of these ideas in the student movement made a marked difference to the extent that students were able to exercise meaningful political agency. The second aspect to draw out from these struggles is more negative. After the suspensions and expulsions from colleges and universities of activists who had led the protests, NGO funds rushed in. New organisations – which provided a dubious political home for the expelled leadership – were founded on the back of this money. The consequences of this influx of donor money are described below.

But what shape did these struggles actually take and how did privatisation manifest itself on university and college campuses across the country? John Bomba was instrumental at organising this resistance, which often took the form of ‘price controls’ enforced by the students. It is worth quoting at length the experience of these ‘anti-privatisation’ campaigns:

It was around, I guess, February [2002]. That’s the time of price controls. So we had a general meeting and we simply decided that these guys were profiteering and students could not afford lunch. So what’s the way out of this? So the following day everyone wakes up to find posters all over the university written ‘Presidential Declaration on Price Controls’ [Bomba was SRC president at NUST]. And the staple food for students is buns so naturally buns were our main target, we said no one is going to sell a bun for more than a certain amount. No one is going to sell a plate of sadza for more than this much and a number of other things, *freezits*, which is the cheapest drink but that’s what students get for their lunch so we put controls on *freezits*.

And the beautiful part of it was that the language was quite threatening. If anyone fails to abide by this, we said, they are not going to be able to exist here. We are simply not going to tolerate them and they cannot do their business here. So a number of guys, because they knew us, they knew our record, they knew that we didn’t mince our words ... We were not playing when we said we were going to come for them if they didn’t stick to what we were declaring, so a number of them they changed, they put down their prices a bit. And I tell you, students were appreciative.

However one old man who was the main supplier of buns adopted our controlled prices but because initially he had shown some resistance, on the next demonstration he was punished. His shop was looted. People broke in and they looted. But later on he came to me after the looting “I adopted the prices that you gave me but still you are looting my shop. I thought we were now coexisting well etc.”

In some cases like that you have to be a little bit diplomatic, you can't tell him that I was responsible for mobilising students to loot your shop. You can only say that you will look into this. So this was part of the strategy that we had, you solve day-to-day problems this way. At one point we were even working out a transport facility for students. We were demanding that the university gives students the university bus. By the time I left it was very close to happening because we were demanding that since the university has got buses and cars, students should use the bus as a shuttle for commuting. Because university workers are paying something like a tenth of what students are paying because they use university transport (Interview, 30 July 2003).

It can be argued – perhaps unfairly – that Bomba's organisational tactics combined elements of the newer desperate activism. The period saw widespread looting by a hardened core of male activists – the ‘UBAmulenge’⁸⁸ – as well as an attempt to politicise and mobilise the movement beyond the politics of ‘meat and sadza’. The extent of this politicisation is questionable. Bomba had a ‘heroic’ reputation on campus, which might not have helped such attempts at politicisation.

5:4:6 Mugabe's youth: NYT and Strategic Studies

ZANU-PF students claim to welcome the formation of the MDC but lament the way the student movement became dominated by the party. It is important not to sideline or dismiss ZANU students as simply stooges of the ruling party. They are not. They are an eclectic group, politically committed and often critical of the ruling party. One example is typical. David Matsikidze, the ZANU-PF Vice-Chairman at UZ, explains his political beliefs:

Ideologically, basically I would say I am inspired by ... I am a ZANU-PF activist, that's the truth and there are certain ideologies, certain principles that I cherish, certain principles that I believe in. For example I believe in black empowerment, I believe in land reform, I believe in so many social programmes that protect the

⁸⁸ One of the terms in the complex and lyrical linguistic world of student activism in Zimbabwe. It refers to an ethnic group – the Banyamulenge – in the eastern Congo who fought Mobutu in the late 1990s. The UBA prefix refers to the University Bachelors Association, a familiar term used to describe the single (and macho) status of male undergraduates.

underprivileged, the poor, things like price control systems, I really believe in them, and many other policies that are targeted at helping the underprivileged (Interview, 5 June 2003).⁸⁹

These principles coincided with a left shift in government policy, which has helped to galvanise ZANU students. The curse on the movement according to Matsikidze is the polarisation on campus since the MDC was formed:

Since the advent of the movement for democratic change, student activism got so polarised such that I think it has affected or it has impacted on student activism in the sense that some of the situations and some of the problems that we find ourselves in, we need to talk with the government, especially our parent ministry, especially when we come to issues like student funding, loans and all that. So because of that excessive polarisation we ended up with a situation whereby student leaders can't sit down and solve student problems. So because of that animosity, nothing was done and we ended up with a scenario whereby there was no dialogues and, you know, things can't happen if there is no talking (Interview, 5 June 2003).

The hegemony of the MDC has led the ruling party to help initiate a number of important projects. In December 2002 a rival national union was formed. The Zimbabwe Congress of Student Unions (ZICSU), although officially 'non-political', was welcomed by ZANU. Most students who are aware of its existence dismiss it as a ZANU front. ZICSU is, however, only one part of the attempt to break-up the MDC hegemony on campus. The controversial formation of the NYS, the national service for youth, is the most explicit attempt. While the six NYS camps that had been established (July 2003) are not an overt attempt to enter the student body they are linked to a wider strategy that is. This 'wider strategy' included the introduction of National Strategic Studies as a core course for students in higher education. Graduates from the camps – numbering more than 13,000 since the inception of the programme in 2000 – have privileged access to tertiary institutions. Their role – though far more ambiguous than the international media allow – is to act as a social buttress supporting the ruling party (Pankhurst, 2002: 119-122).

⁸⁹ Matsikidze is a mature student who comes from a farming background. Before he returned to university he worked as a farm manager. When he finishes his degree in Agricultural Economics he intends to return to farming. In the 2003 SRC election Matsikidze refused to accept party funding for his campaign and paid for it through a small fruit and vegetable stall he keeps in the Student Union building. He is widely regarded as independently minded and can be seen arguing fraternally with students. This 'fraternal debate' was typical of the atmosphere at the university in 2003.

Among certain graduates from the camps interviewed in Chegutu – a government stronghold two hours from Harare – there was an explicit commitment to the ruling party. A number complained that they should be taught in more detail about the functions of government, “because we have become part of the government and the government now relies on us.” The diversity of their training expresses the government’s uneasy commitment to state-capitalism and neo-liberalism. One graduate described the courses, “as a combination of things but mainly Marxism, Socialism and Business Management” (Interviews, Chegutu, 10 -12 June 2003).

The role they play for the regime was illustrated in the MDC’s ‘final push’ in June 2003.⁹⁰ A large number of ‘green bombers’ – labelled such because of their green uniforms – were bussed into the city to maintain order. One graduate from Chegutu described his role during the week:

In the recent mass action I supplied the police with information on what the MDC youths were planning to do, where they were meeting and at what time they were going to do their mass action. I also gave them names of activists. I think that it was not a good idea to march to State House (Interviews, Chegutu, 10 -12 June 2003).

Other NYS graduates describe their ‘municipal’ work, where graduates are given work in hospitals (five of those interviewed were working in Chegutu hospital) and many describe how they were more politically involved, for example in controlling food queues (Zeilig, 2004a: 32-35).

Since March 2003 the government has attempted to introduce National Strategic Studies at colleges and universities. This is a compulsory course that focuses on Zimbabwean history, concentrating on the war of liberation. In June 2004 there was a scandal at Harare Polytechnic over the refusal to allow students who had not completed National Strategic Studies to graduate (Interview Tawanda Kanhema 5 June 2004). Among students from the NYS, many take a National Orientation course that is intended to prepare them for tertiary education. It is advisable to avoid a simplistic interpretation of these programmes as simply intended to indoctrinate gullible youths. Although they are intended to undermine student activism and to act as ‘young vets’ defending the

⁹⁰A weeklong stayaway that was meant to turn the tables on the government.

regime,⁹¹ many of the students spoke with genuine enthusiasm about the courses, and after graduation from the course they are often given work for the first time (Kriger, 2005).

The first public meeting in Zimbabwe to discuss NYS was held in Harare in August 2003 (New Ambassador Hotel, Harare, 21 August 2003, personal recording). The scheme was justified by one of its graduates at the meetings as resolving the intractable problem of urban unemployment: “NYS is trying to say this: that we don’t need to create a nation of workers. We need to instil entrepreneurship in the minds of every Zimbabwean. For every Zimbabwean to own their own business. We are trying to say to every Zimbabwean youth to be a commodity broker.” While a nation of ‘commodity brokers’ may seem far-fetched, it expresses the complex reality of a country that has faced economic collapse, retrenchment and political crisis since the early 1990s. The ‘Marxism and socialism’ comes from a political strategy pursued by the regime in an attempt to outflank the opposition, and the emphasis on informal employment and business studies are economic realities that have emerged after years of adjustment and neo-liberalism. Although it is important to remember that ZANU-PF has always combined a public commitment to Marxism with a less ideological interpretation, the recent ‘return’ to such radical and leftist rhetoric is consistent in many ways with the historical behaviour of the party (Pankhurst, 2002: 116-7).

Among students undertaking NSS there was an almost unanimous dislike of the course, many questioning the level of history that they were being taught. This expresses the divisions that separate students in higher education and rural youths who are the main target for the residential training. Student activists will have to be conscious of these ambiguities if they are to counter the effect of NYS and NSS. However it is important to stress that these reforms have a long history in Zimbabwean educational curriculum, with repeated attempts to introduce a more practical emphasis in education. For example the Political Economy of Zimbabwe taught in secondary schools was justified using similar language (see Ansell, 2002; Jansen, 1991).

⁹¹ NYS graduates came of age in the week of action. This is not an attempt to excuse them: NYS trainees and graduates have unquestionably been responsible for some of the worst rural violence in the last two years.

5:4:7 'Commodification of resistance'

The period of frustrated transition has created many distortions in student activism. But there is a larger theme that has seen student activism transformed across much of sub-Saharan Africa in the period of structural adjustment, as a result of a process that activists in Zimbabwe have called the 'commodification of resistance' (see chapter 7). The effect of structural adjustment across Africa – the ESAP policies pursued by the ZANU government in Zimbabwe – has had a contradictory impact on the nature of social movements and resistance. While it has created conditions for 'bread riots and resistance' in Africa it has also diverted these struggles (described in chapter 1). As the Zimbabwean socialist Gwisai explains, "the crisis of neo-liberalism as well as creating massive revolts in peripheral capitalist countries has also led to the co-option of the middle class and a layer of the working class by donor agencies and NGOs" (Personal communication, 2003). The term 'commodification of resistance' has been used by the ISO to describe how resistance is being privatised (or perhaps a better term is 'bought') by NGOs in Zimbabwe. This is perhaps a symptom of the frustrated transition, and the decline in the movement that gave birth to the MDC, which has led to the massive distortion of social resistance by the introduction of donor money. This phenomenon has been described elsewhere in the world (see Petras, 1999; Ungpakorn, 2004).

Every political organisation is sucked in. ISO members are drawn from party routine and activity to well-funded NCA meetings that reimburse delegates providing them with generous allowance and luxury accommodation. A NCA youth congress held in Mutare in June 2003 is a good example. Expenses of Z\$11,000 to Z\$18,000 (equivalent to a weekly wage for many) were provided to delegates for the three-day congress. The full cost of holding the congress was eight or nine million Zimbabwe dollars. The effect on a small, grassroots organisations like the ISO can be catastrophic. Leading members flocked to the congress in Mutare.⁹² John Bomba captures these distortions and the effect the 'commodification of resistance' has on the student movement:

[I]t brings in the question of how the international community has been able to assist us in advancing the cause and in some sense there has also been an element of some

⁹² In the current crisis it is impossible to blame these activists. They are paid and treated to meals, transport and 'expenses' but the point remains that it fundamentally alters the nature of resistance.

misplaced international support that has actually drawn us back. With this asylum thing it has opened a massive window for opportunists ...⁹³ It even links with the element of funding. With the crisis in Zimbabwe and the attention that has been focused there has been massive monies coming into Zimbabwe. You find a plethora of NGOs ... that do nothing that is relevant to the plight of Zimbabwe but nonetheless they are getting massive financial support. So there is this element, which we in the ISO call the 'commodification of resistance', people now selling the ability to resist (Interview, 22 May 2003).

One graphic example illustrates the problems. In early 2003 the previous executive of the national union ZINASU established the Zimbabwe Youth Democracy Trust on money received by a Norwegian NGO. It became a political base for students and ex-student leaders who are no longer office holders in the student movement. The effect is to shift the focus from grassroots programmes to building up superimposed organisations unrelated to political activism. Another initiative was the Student Solidarity Fund (SSF) that was originally established in 2002 after a wave of student expulsions, providing funds to expelled students to continue their studies through correspondence courses with South African universities. The funds are administered by the previous leadership of the student union and open to extensive abuse (Kagoro, Interview 26 June 2003).

There is certainly a question mark over the motives of certain donor bodies, and a new generation of critical student leaders have been attempting to counter the effect of this 'commodification'. It is tempting to conclude that some organisations might desire to divert attention from the street to conferences and interminable public meetings. Public meetings are frequently held in hotels and conference centres across the country but with no political programme or serious linkages with the grassroots (see chapter 7). John Bomba's critique is reflective of the contempt many people now hold for the NGO community in Zimbabwe: they have "disarmed the movement that was emerging from the ground, shifted people's focus from the real battles to some very fantastical arenas" (Interview, 22 May 2002). But the real reason why civil society has been exposed to such distortions ('disarming') is the way that the opposition – and the resistance that built it – has ebbed away since the formation of the MDC.

⁹³ Members of the former ZINASU executive were offered asylum in Norway in 2002 when they were receiving the International Peace Prize on behalf of the national union. Their lives were not at risk in Zimbabwe.

5:4:8 The ‘final push’: students and patriotic youth

All of the themes of the student movement after 1995 were expressed in the failed ‘final push’, launched by the MDC on the 2 June 2003.⁹⁴ Students were mobilised for the ‘final push’ by the ex-ZINASU executive, which is supported by the SSF. The political space that students occupy on campus meant that the demonstration of students at the UZ was one of the only arenas that were able to respond to the MDC ‘final push’. Instead of this activism arising from grassroots structures – the structures that were so active (and badly funded) during the highpoints of the student movement in the 1990s – the ‘Action Committees’ set up by MDC members in colleges and universities around the campus were mostly top-down distribution centres for ‘pitos’ (the Shona word for whistles). And crucially these ‘committees’ were not replicated in trade unions. Students, isolated without their traditional allies in the ZCTU, could easily be put down. Without the crucial ‘convergence of forces’ that the movement experienced in the 1990s, students were unable to sustain their resistance. Students proved again that they are easy to mobilise but even easier to sacrifice.

These failings reflect a weakness alluded to in chapter 3, that students lack the crucial ‘socio-economic stakes’, which cripples their ability to paralyse political power. This point is illustrated well in the case of Zimbabwe; the government with some impunity could close the principal national university in Harare in 1998 for five months, without devastating consequences. It should, however, be remembered that this closure was used by student activists to galvanise support for their action, and generate momentum for a new opposition party that emerged the following year. Still, Biko’s point about student action remains:

students have one fundamental weakness which is mainly that they are not located at the nerve centre of the system and no matter what action they do, the system can afford to ignore them. It can afford to have all the students out of colleges for two years without having any serious economic backlash (Interview, 16 May 2003).

It is worth relating the aftermath of the demonstration at the university. At UZ almost 4,000 students attempted to access the approach road from the campus that would have

⁹⁴ Students were the only group that was mobilised during the final push. Malcolm X (1965) commented that students are excellent revolutionaries and easy to mobilise: “The students didn’t think in terms of the odds against them.” They do not consider the ‘impossibility’ of political change (see chapter 3).

taken them to the city. They were viciously beaten. The following day the corridors in one student residence on campus, nicknamed Baghdad, were covered in blood.⁹⁵ One window of a ground floor flat overlooking the courtyard was broken, and only the jagged glass left. The frame and the wall were drenched, as if someone had emptied a bucket of blood. Students running from the military police hid in their rooms and corridors; the police then fired tear gas canisters into the rooms. In one room, the canister ignited the mattress adding flames to the toxic fumes. The two students in the room were prevented from leaving by riot police in the corridor. Struggling to breathe one student broke the shattered plane of glass; his head now partly exposed was repeatedly hit by police wielding batons in the courtyard. 45 students were admitted to hospital. By the end of the week Mugabe expressed 'regret' at having to teach these 'youths' a lesson (Zeilig, 2004a).

A number of female students were viciously beaten. One described the incident to me:

Last Monday I was coming from home. I had gone home for the weekend. And when we arrived at the commuter omnibus rank there were soldiers and police and they ordered us to get down and lie on our stomachs and they started beating us. And inside, just beside that junction at the bus stop, there were boys who were singing and they were being assaulted by a group of police. And after we were beaten we were told to run and join the boys and the assaults continued, I think it was for almost an hour and half and after that a man came from the security office. The chief security officer of the university came and asked for permission to get the girls. It was granted and he took us to the security control room and then he later telephoned the staff at the clinic. They came and gave us painkillers and treated us ... it was terrible (Philippa, interview 14 June 2003).

According to those attacked, the police and army were determined to humiliate them because of their perception of being less educated. Philippa, the student quoted above, explains what army personnel were saying:

Murikuda kutengesa nyika nepito you want to sell the country for a whistle. And they were also saying that *ndo zvamatunwa naTsvangirai*, that's what you have been sent by Tsvangirai to do go. Go and tell him *kuti hapana zvaano tiita isusu*, that there is nothing he can do to us; we are the strongest army in Africa, and no one can do anything. And they were saying *munofunga tirimgrade four and imimi*

⁹⁵ The hall of residence has been called 'Baghdad' by students since the first gulf war in 1991. It is used to accommodate first year students and has been the scene of particularly violent confrontations (bombardments) with the police. In the aftermath of the demonstration described in the text, Baghdad stuck me as a completely appropriate nickname.

makadzidza sitereki munofunga kuti madzidza sitereki saka hamuna zvamunotiita saka tatokuwanirai ipapa. Tirikuda kukuratidzai kuti negrade four yedu tinogona kukukuvadza. You think we are grade fours and you are very educated, you think you are now so learned and there is nothing that we can do to you. Now this is our chance and we have got you. We want to show you that with our grade four we can still harm you.

Against the women they said *imimi tikasangana nemi murodhi munotiita kunge tisina kudzidza sitereki. Saka hamumbofa makatida.saka munoda kuzviita masalad sitereki saka nhasi toda kuchibvisa chisalad chese ichocho* when we meet you on the way you treat us as uneducated people. So there is no way you can ever love us. You think you are special, so today we want to reduce you to size.

This experience is illustrative of what Bianchini called ‘diploma fetishism’ (see section 5:3:1 above). Education – and the accumulation of diplomas – has long been a key symbol of social status, and the ability to access the post-colonial state. The UZ is at the apex of this ‘fetishism’ and a crucial instrument for the distribution of what Bourdieu (1999) described as ‘cultural capital.’

5:4:9 Summary

The causes of the malaise in the student movement are complex and ultimately linked to the political orientation of the regime and the development of the MDC. The formation of the MDC brought with it an avalanche of hope, that came from the structures and movements that gave it life. The ‘transition’ it promised, activists genuinely believed, would follow within months. A new government would be informed by the struggles that had taken place against neo-liberalism and the founding statements of the party indicated that these were not false hopes (Bond and Manyanya, 2002). These activists – including a layer of ex-student leaders who entered parliament as MDC MPs – had learnt their politics combating the effects of privatisation under ESAP. “We were trained by leftists” as Kagoro argues, often through the ISO. Their politics expressed a deep commitment to free education, which was anathema to the policy priorities of the government.

These same activists – who continued as MDC militants, MPs and supporters – were now championing a party that had swung under the banner of neo-liberalism. Students complained that they were not consulted during the drafting of the party’s education

policy, but this was symptomatic of a wider degeneration of the opposition. One ex-student leader, MP Job Sikhala, explains the extraordinary metamorphosis of the party:

I remember last week [July 2003] I addressed a meeting in Mount Pleasant Hall [next to the UZ], myself and the MDC president, we were the major speakers there. When the students asked my president questions about how much is the party concerned about the welfare of the students, he had to throw back the problem to the students themselves, that “Why don’t you find the solution on your own, you can not think that the MDC can come and interfere at the university for you to remove privatisation and the like.” They are no longer taking the student base seriously ...

I thought that the MDC was going to take over power in the year 2000, definitely. I was convinced. We were serious. We were all determined. Also, now the problem that we are having today, that was not there in the year 2000, is the greed for economic riches within the party leadership and structures ... financial concerns have been put ahead of the struggle. The struggle now takes second place in the scramble and fight for economic riches within the party.

The MDC was founded by a group of the poor; it was group of totally the poor and a few middle classes. But now it is almost a party of the rich. Those who are within the core of the party, the inner core, are really fat and thick. You cannot look at a person who was with you during the foundation of the MDC as the person who is there now (Interview, 31 July 2003).

At the same time that the MDC – an organisation in large part formed by the dynamism and energy of the student movement – distanced itself from its social base, the ruling party transformed itself into a social movement. This movement animated the party more than at any time since the liberation struggle of the 1960s and ’70s. It included the politicisation of the rural poor through the controversial Land Reform Programme, the radicalisation of war veterans – who had been excluded from the political cake after independence – and crucially for this thesis the political engagement with youth through National Youth Service and the recent introduction of National Strategic Studies.

The regime was given the space to pursue this strategy because of the failure of the opposition. On each of these issues the MDC managed, with extraordinary consistency, to move further to the right, leaving the party disarmed and unable to articulate the frustrations and passions that the ruling party sought to galvanise. This process was not inevitable. Many activists attempted to reverse the collapse of the opposition into the fatal grip of neo-liberalism, to prevent the party from becoming what Sikhala describes as “almost a party of the rich” (Interview, 31 July 2003). In February 2001 the left-wing

MDC MP Munyaradzi Gwisai (expelled from the party together with the ISO in December 2002) addressed a party ‘leadership seminar’. The blame for the party’s current morass, he argued, was the “hijacking of the party by the bourgeoisie, marginalisation of workers, adoption of neo-liberal positions and cowardly failure to physically confront the Mugabe regime and bosses.” Gwisai (2002b: 25) concluded with the prophetic warning: “It is ... imperative that the party moves much more leftward ... in order to realign to its base.” The ability to ‘hijack’ was linked to the historically weak organisations and politics of the trade union movements, and the political coherence – even in a period of neo-liberalism – of a middle class-intelligentsia. There was a strategy that may have enabled the MDC to outflank Mugabe from the left, exposing, as Gwisai puts it, the government’s ‘fake anti-imperialism’.

5:5 Conclusion

There are several critical themes that have emerged from this chapter, that need to be linked to the general arguments that are being made in the thesis. Student activists in Zimbabwe were forged in the crucible of the struggle for independence: the ‘student-intelligentsia’ who were expelled from the University of Rhodesia in 1973 became leading members in the guerrilla war. After independence student activists saw themselves through the prism of this ‘student-intelligentsia’ and the historical role they played in the war. By 1988 student activists described themselves as ‘revolutionary intellectuals’, illustrating their politically privileged status in Zimbabwe. They advanced the first penetrating critique of the regime, proving to many people, still under the spell of ZANU-PF, that it was possible to demonstrate against the regime. However this was a time when they could draw on a political vocabulary of the left that was widely used in Zimbabwe – and globally – in the 1980s. Although Mutambara (1991: 139-140) attempted to explain the collapse of the Berlin Wall as an “attempt to restore the democratic and humanistic values of socialism lost through the vulgarisation and distortions of the ideology since the Stalinist era,” his arguments were not entirely convincing. The ‘Marxism-Leninism’ that he continued to identify the student movement with in 1991, was now being rejected internationally.

In the years that followed, students saw their status converge increasingly with broader social forces, under the impact of structural adjustment programmes. However, even in

this convergence students repeatedly acted as “the spark that lights the powder keg.” Student activism in Zimbabwe cannot be accurately divided between a ‘high politics’ of the early post-independent years, and a crude economism of the 1990s. We find elements of both ‘periods’ in the activism of students during the transition. Students were able to exercise meaningful political agency, and made use of new ideological tools provided by the ISO.

Yet there can be no sadder testimony to the ultimate failure of the opposition (and in turn the student movement) than the blunt response students received in July 2003 when they asked what role they had in the party (Job Sikhala, interview, 31 July 2003). Although it might be far-fetched to conclude that the MDC, “are no longer taking the student ... base seriously,” many students now argue that it is imperative that the student movement recovers its autonomy and independent vigour from the political child that, to give birth to, it had laboured so hard. The contrast, as we have seen, with the heady days of the late 1990s could not be more dramatic. Bomba expresses this frustration extremely well: “Those who remember 1997 to 2000 today feel like they are living in lost times. Every day activists ask what it will take to rebuild the confidence and idealism that drove us in the 1990s ... One wishes for a return of the madness” (Interview, 18 January 2005).

Chapter 6

Political change and student resistance in Senegal

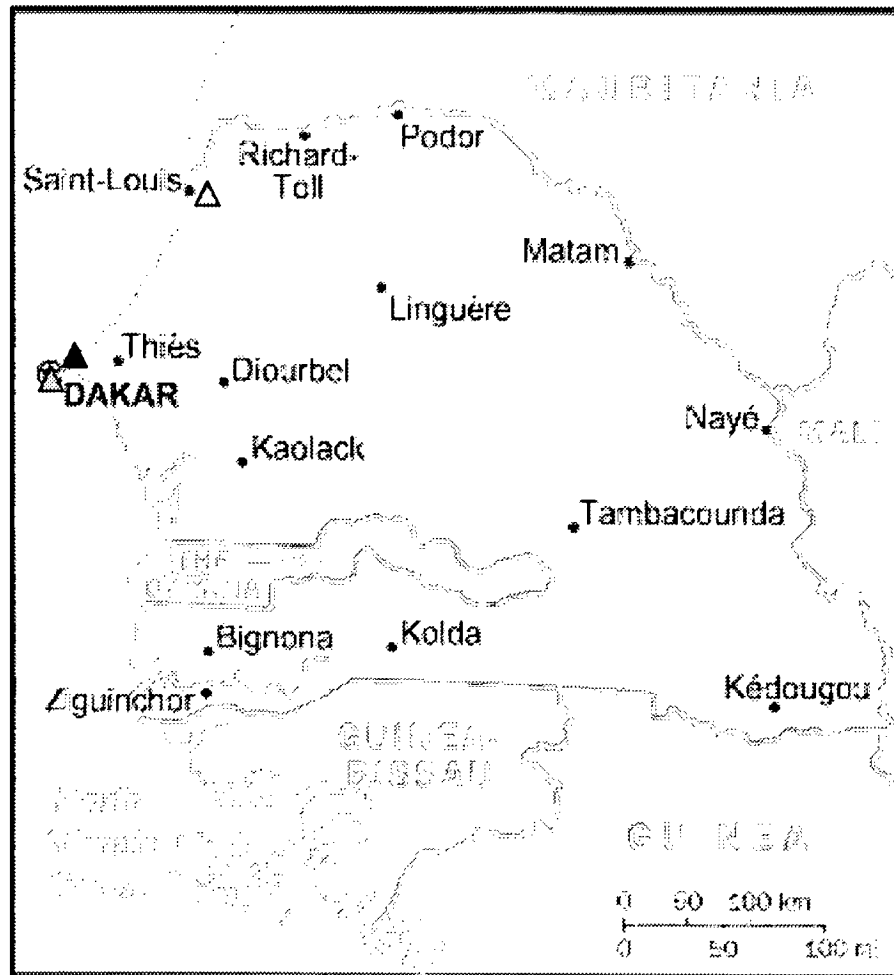
6:1 Introduction

Senegalese university students have always exerted a high degree of political independence. In the last thirty years they have been seen alternatively as a vanguard for democratic change or troublemakers manipulated by political elites. The high point in their activism is regarded as the student (and, later, trade union) uprising in 1968, which almost brought down the government of President Senghor after only eight years of independence (Bathily, 1992). Student unrest was a continual theme throughout the 1970s and 1980s, and in 1988 students again dominated national politics and led the protests contesting the elections (Bianchini, 2004). In the recent election of President Wade students were courted by the opposition to participate in the national crusade for *sopi* (Wolof for 'change'). When this victory came, many students regarded it as their achievement. Before long, however, students were claiming to be the 'new' opposition to the new government (Zeilig, 2002c).

Senegal was also one of the first countries to introduce structural adjustment (Fall, 1997); this dramatically affected funding of higher education. In these conditions of market-led rationalisation of university education, were Senegalese students still able to exercise political agency? Ten years ago (1995) students were written-off, "left with their daily corporatism and the inefficiency of their fights" (Bathily *et al*, 1995: 401). Students in the mid-1990s were, according to Cruise O'Brien (1996: 65), prepared to defend their elite status.

This chapter shows that, contrary to the literature cited above, Senegalese students have managed to exercise political agency throughout the post-independence period. The first part of the chapter looks briefly at the political and economic trajectory of Senegal. The

Map 6:1 Universities in Senegal



- △ Université Cheikh Anta Diop
- △ Université Gaston Berger
- ▲ Suffolk University

Source: adapted from The World Factbook (CIA)

second part gives a detailed account of the evolution of the student movement, and the growth of their opposition to successive post-independent governments. The final part of the chapter considers the role of students in the recent political transition and is based on extensive interviews and archival research (Dahou and Foucher, 2004; see also Zeilig, 2004). Students demonstrated both a *syndicalisme alimentaire* (economism) and an *avant-gardisme* associated with an earlier period of activism. The university was not peripheral to the new government, but a vital site for political reforms. The sections in this part of the chapter follow two important moments at the university. The first period is student activism at the university in the run-up to the presidential elections in 2000, and the second period focuses on the key strike on the campus a year after the election. Later sections examine the nature of student participation in the new government and the ways in which many ex-student militants were corrupted and co-opted by the regime. By focusing on these years, the chapter examines students and their (constrained) political agency during the *changement politique* in Senegal.

6:2 Political and economic background

The first part of the chapter briefly surveys the main political and economic changes in Senegal since independence. This helps to clarify the political background to student activism. The student movement that emerged in 1966 (Bianchini, 2002) responded to the tensions that were breaking through the relative calm of post-independence Senegal. A more detailed history of Senegal is then told in part 6:2 but through the prism of an increasingly buoyant and oppositional student movement.

6:2:1 Political and economic change in the 1960s and 1970s

Leopold Senghor's *Bloc Démocratique Sénégalais* dominated the political scene following independence in 1960. Senegal secured a certain degree of political calm through state-led development in the early years of independence; this was rapidly eroded as the country was struck by an international recession that forced down the prices of Senegal's main agricultural exports. The new regime had inherited – and was committed to maintaining – the colonial structures of political and economic control. The government was determined to guarantee an intimate relationship with France. In addition, the political fate of the Senghor's party (and the political trajectory of the state

after independence) was tied to the control of groundnut production by religious leaders known as the Marabout (Mbodj, 1992).

By the end of the decade the situation began to deteriorate, as a result of a number of interrelated factors. The French abolished the price guarantees on oil seed in 1967 and Senegal experienced the worse cycle of drought since independence between 1968 and 1969 (Mbodj, 1992: 94-98). As we shall see, political calm was finally destroyed in 1968, which saw the first major crisis for the government. Originally starting as a student revolt in May – in tandem with events in France that year – it rapidly became generalised as trade unions raised their own demands and called for a general strike. French troops stationed in the capital Dakar helped to suppress the demonstrations and strike (Bathily, 1992).

Senegal then entered a period of political turmoil. Several political parties were born, helping to determine the political trajectory in the 1970s and 1980s. Perhaps the most significant of these was the *Parti Démocratique Sénégalais* (PDS) created in 1974 and led by the lawyer Abdoulaye Wade. Nevertheless, Senghor managed to remain largely unopposed from within his party, renamed the *Parti Socialiste* in 1976. By 1980 – after 20 years as president – he was able to choose his political heir. Abdou Diouf replaced him that year and held power until 2000 (Diop, 1993).

6:2:2 Political change and structural adjustment in the 1980s and 1990s

Abdou Diouf presided over hardening economic realities that had been developing throughout the 1970s. The country has been crippled by an economic crisis since the late 1970s, linked to the international collapse in commodity prices internationally. The fall in the price of primary goods was worsened by rising costs in the public sector. Senegal was one of the first countries in sub-Saharan Africa to introduce a structural adjustment programme through the World Bank and IMF. The stated aim was to restore the equilibrium to the country's finances, but one of the most commonly felt effects of these reforms – stretching for almost twenty years – was the 'austerity' targeted at the public sector, regarded as over-funded by international lending agencies. In 1985 it was estimated that 60 percent of the government's expenditure was consumed by the civil service (Fall, 1997: xv). That year under the aegis of the IMF the government launched

a programme of reform aimed at correcting these distortions by reorienting the economy through the reduction in the role of the state in economic affairs.

Wade's *Parti Démocratique Sénégalais* (PDS) rose to prominence in the 1980s. Although the *Parti Socialiste* (PS) easily won elections in 1983 and 1988, on both occasions many argued that the voting had been rigged. The year 1988 saw the country plunge into another major political crisis that bore a close resemblance to the political turmoil the country confronted twenty years earlier. Wade fled to France after his arrest that year. Following this crisis, calls for political reform were much more widely heard (Diop and Diouf, 1990).

In 1990 Wade returned from exile and back to politics, welcomed by crowds shouting *sopi*. That became the slogan for the movement for democratic transformation. Eight political parties signed a declaration that demanded the president's resignation and fresh (and free) elections. The following year the National Assembly officially sanctioned the involvement of opposition parties in the government and Wade was made Minister of State (Diop, 1993: 10-11).

In the presidential election of 1993 Wade resigned his position in the government and stood against Diouf, winning 32 percent of the vote. Diouf entered his third term. In the legislative election held the same year the ruling party secured more than two-thirds of the votes. Soon after the election the government redoubled its efforts in implementing further economic adjustment that was to have a dramatic effect on university reform (Bianchini, 2004). The devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994 deepened the political and economic crisis in the country. Continued privatisation of the economy led to serious clashes with the trade unions, including the imprisonment of several leading trade unionists who were particularly vocal (and active) in their opposition to the rapid extension of privatisation (Diop, 2002: 13). The devaluation also led to a significant adjustment in bilateral relations with France.

The legislative election in 1998 saw yet another victory for the PS, and confirmed Senegal's title as a 'semi-democracy' (Diop and Diouf, 1990). Still, with the economic crisis grinding inexorably on, and the government lacking real legitimacy, by the end of the 1990s the picture remained bleak. According to the World Bank's figures, the

industrial sector lost more than 21 percent of its workforce in the 1990s (Fall, 1997: xv). The trade unions also saw their room for manoeuvre, and consequently their capacity to contest the changes, restricted by new legislation. More than 20 years after the first programme was introduced, the crisis that they were implemented to resolve was regarded by most to have deepened.

Support for the opposition continued to rise in the run up to the presidential election in 2000. A short general strike the previous year, while not directly related to the political situation, was further evidence that the government was without urban support. Wade was finally victorious and Diouf stepped down. The result shocked the public and commentators alike, many of whom had previously dismissed the notion that the PS could be defeated. The democratic transition was confirmed the following year when a new constitution – limiting presidential terms to five years – was passed with 90 percent approval. In the legislative election in April that year the presidential result was confirmed with extraordinary finality. Wade's eclectic coalition comprising 40 parties – '*coalition alternance*' – swept to power, winning 89 seats to the PS's ten. These changes should not be minimised, but in the literature that has emerged since the *alternance* there has been a remarkable silence on the role of students (see Niang, 2004; Wane 2003). The second part of the chapter examines the evolution of the student movement in Senegal.

6:3 Aspects of Senegalese student activism 1950-1998

In surveys in 1960, the year of independence, Senegalese students showed a greater degree of political identity than other student groups in Africa (Hanna and Hanna, 1975). They provided support for both the opposition and the government, leading some to observe that "national political leaders ... view student activists as rival politicians rather than as students" (Hanna, 1975:13). In the last thirty years they have been seen alternatively as a vanguard for democratic change or troublemakers manipulated by political elites. In the recent presidential election, students were courted by the opposition to participate in the national crusade for *sopi*. When this victory came, many students regarded it as their achievement. However, the state of the university and the corruption of the state gave way to a realistic assessment of political change and

demands for opportunities for personal advance.⁹⁶ Before long, students were claiming to be the ‘new’ opposition to the new government, issues that are taken up in part three of the chapter.

This part of the chapter returns to the central argument of the thesis that university students – although their ‘action’ has been transformed by international and domestic factors – are privileged political actors in the third world. They comprise part of the political elite linked to the relative *faiblesse* (weakness) of other social groups in society. The Senegalese student movement – formed and reformed in the politicised and rarefied spaces of the university campus in Dakar – has played a vital and contradictory role in the country’s political transformation. The first section examines some of the historical antecedents of the student movement before independence. It is then argued that, contrary to some of the historical literature (Bathily, Diouf and Mbodj 1995), students are not a pampered elite motivated solely by corporatist – or what is referred to disparagingly as ‘bread and butter’ – demands. Several moments of student activism in Senegal are highlighted, to illustrate the continuities and transformation in their activism, and the final sections return to the problem of how we understand student mobilisation.

6:3:1 Early students

Student politics in Senegal emerged as much outside the country as they did from within. One vital element was the role of an ‘exiled’ student-intelligentsia. It was these students who were among the first militant anti-colonialists. The role of the *Parti Communiste Français* (PCF) in the 1920s was an important influence on activists like Lamine Senghor. The Communist Party expressed an anti-racism that was also internationalist and attracted many of the best militants. In 1933 the *Association des Etudiants Ouest-Africains* was created and run by Léopold Senghor. However, it was not until the 1950s that Senegalese students began to participate directly in the nationalist struggle.

⁹⁶ A demand, particularly strong at the university, in recent years, is for access to foreign visas, notably for western Europe and the United States (Harding, 2000).

The main organisations that emerged in the 1950s, the *Association Générale des Etudiants de Dakar* (AGED) and subsequently the *Union Générale des Etudiants d'Afrique de l'Ouest* (UGEAO), remained limited despite their attempts to extend their influence. In the 1950s students were often linked to radical nationalist parties particularly around two groups, the *Parti Africain de l'Indépendance* (PAI)⁹⁷ and the *Parti du Regroupement Africain* (PRA).⁹⁸ Students played a central role in both of these organisations and in the ideological and political mobilisations at the time (Bianchini, 2002).

The history of the movement is vital to the identity of the student movement today. There is a remarkable 'historical consciousness' among students and in Senegalese society generally, as Bianchini comments: "when one observes African student movements in relation to their northern counterparts, one is struck by the constant references to past mobilisations through the 'history of the student movement' or various 'commemorations'" (Bianchini, 2002: 363). In addition one is struck by the 'historical memory' of students in determining and defining the movement. Although it is not possible to rely entirely on students themselves for the demarcation of the movement, their self-identity is formed and reformed by repeated references through '*des commémorations diverses*'. The press regularly covers student politics – often, even, its minutiae – which is an aspect of this process. In a short period of research for this study (January-April 2004) the movement and its '*revendications*' (demands) were frequently mentioned in the press and in political meetings ('dinner-debates') held on campus.⁹⁹

The *Association Musulmane des Etudiants d'Afrique Noire* (AMEAN) also played an important and underestimated role. AMEAN was established in the early 1950s during what might be called the first 'Islamic' revival. The period saw an increasingly self-confident Muslim world that included the violent liberation struggle in Algeria and the rise of Gamal Abdel-Nasser and the 1956 Suez crisis in Egypt. AMEAN was at the vanguard of this ideological and religious revival in Senegal. But there were also

⁹⁷ Established in 1957 as pro-Soviet and campaigning for immediate independence.

⁹⁸ Established in 1958 under Senghor's leadership.

⁹⁹ 'lorsqu'on observe ces mouvements étudiants africains, relativement aux mouvements sociaux ayant pour cadre le milieu scolaire et universitaire dans les pays du Nord, on est frappé par la recherche permanente de références aux mobilisations passées, à travers des 'historiques du mouvement étudiant' ou des commémorations' diverses' (Bianchini, 2002: 363).

important local factors. One was the Catholic and Christian bias of the colonial authorities and the presence of an active Catholic youth organisation. AMEAN stated that first priorities were issues of religious practice, diet and holidays. The first issue of *Vers l'Islam*, a journal set up by members of the association, was uncategorical about the need for AMEAN: "Superstitions, prejudice and lies distort the perception of our religion for its best believers, the lazy Islamic practice from the streets so different from the vivid dynamic of the Qu'ran ... the creation of AMEAN confirms our successful effort to break away from the monstrous [deformations]" (Ly, undated:10).¹⁰⁰ These demands were doubtless antagonised by what Ciré Ly called 'eucharistic imperialism' where the French celebrated the emancipatory potential of Christianity yet lambasted the vices of Islam.¹⁰¹ Student Islam emerged in confrontation with the colonial state and as a precursor to the role students would play in the new state.

The explicitly political dimensions to the association's activities are the most revealing. AMEAN tirelessly opposed the attempts of the authorities to divide the Muslim community, arguing that the 'meddling' *Bureau des Affaires Musulmanes* must be scrapped. The association's newspaper *Vers l'Islam* concentrated on 'friendly' foes, the Marabouts – religious leaders - who they saw as collaborating 'profiteers'. On the leaders of the brotherhoods:

Many ... strut about today, covered with all their decorations for 'services rendered' ... These very same people agree with the administration how to eradicate Islamic movements agitating all over black Africa (quoted in Bathily *et al*, 1995: 388).

Yet there was another element to their radicalism; as well as seeing Marabouts as accumulating "scandalous wealth" (1995: 388) they saw the need to build alliances with other forces in the nationalist struggle.¹⁰²

AMEAN collaborated with secular student groups. Although the leading student organisation *Association Générale des Etudiants de Dakar* (AGED) expressed disquiet about the association's political credentials, these were quickly allayed; AMEAN had

¹⁰⁰ "Les superstitions, les préjugés et les mensonges qui défigurent notre religion aux yeux de ses meilleurs fidèles, l'Islam paresseux de la rue si différent de la doctrine dynamique et vivifiante du Coran ... la naissance de l'AMEAN concrétise notre effort heureux pour rompre avec la monstrueuse."

¹⁰¹ The term is used in a collection of articles from *Vers l'Islam* published between 1953-56 *Où va l'Afrique* (Ly, undated), a powerful and passionate critique of French colonialism.

¹⁰² Some branches of the brotherhoods cooperated with AMEAN and joined them at the 1956 congress.

links to the *Union Générale des Etudiants Musulmans* in Algeria. The 1956 congress of AMEAN went on to pass a motion supporting the Algerian struggle, and in an interview with an Algerian student activist, the association expressed a desire to “come together with the people in their struggle” (Ly, undated: 99).¹⁰³ These commitments were not simply in the realm of ideas and good intentions, a number of AMEAN members were trade union activists and members of left-wing groups, including the *Union Démocratique Sénégalaise* (affiliated to the *Rassemblement Démocratique Africain*). The extent of this radicalisation is conveyed by one member, Modibo Diallo, who attempted to bring to light the links between Islam and socialism: “We Muslims support a human orientated socialism allowing freedom of conscience ... We encourage a type of socialism which would secure the full development of every faculty in the individual, in the sole interest of society” (quoted Bathily *et al*, 1995: 392). Another leading member of AMEAN saw the need to develop a radical programme for liberation: “It is time to think again about Socialism and Marxism ... to keep the dynamic and constructive scientific enquiry of African politics” (Ly, undated: 100-101).¹⁰⁴ One study even concluded that, “AMEAN seems to have been somewhat instrumental in the intellectual movement which led to challenging the ideological bases of the colonial system” (Bathily *et al*, 1994: 392). It is certainly the case that the association helped define a socially radical Muslim identity on the threshold of independence; an identity students would continue to hold.¹⁰⁵

When the university of Dakar was founded in 1957 it was (and remained until 1971) a French university. There are two important factors connected to this. Firstly, Senegalese students for the first decade after independence were a minority at the university: Europeans, Lebanese and other African students were far more numerous. Secondly, the students at the university were to a large extent *choyés* (pampered) or spoilt by the authorities, eager to avoid making the university a site of contestation. The university did not become a space for collective mobilisations for a number of years (Gross, 1968).

¹⁰³ “rejoindre ce peuple dans sa lutte.”

¹⁰⁴ “Il est temps de repenser Socialisme et Marxisme ... conserver le scientisme dynamique et constructif dans la réorientation et l’organisation méthodique de la politique africaine.”

¹⁰⁵ The fusion of religious and ‘political’ discourse is an important theme in Senegalese politics. Among the left there is no hesitation in incorporating religious language with traditional expressions of the left. ‘Inch’ Allah’ and ‘al hamdulillah’ are mixed with ‘chers camarades’ etc. More important, perhaps, is the role of Islam on the campus. Few traditional figures of ‘student resistance’ (Guevara, Malcolm X, etc.) are evident, but famous marabouts – notably Sirigne Salious M’baïke – and the ubiquitous image of Cheikh Amadou Bamba are present everywhere in bedrooms, cafeterias and restaurants at the university.

According to Bianchini, student activism in the independent period emerged only in 1966. He claims it is possible to identify the roots of the student movement among students in the pre-independence organisation *Fédération des Etudiants d'Afrique Noire en France* (FEANF) and among Muslim student groups in Senegal but neither constituted for him a 'student movement'; "the social movement was evolving in those associations of exiled students."¹⁰⁶ Prior to the mid-1960s he speaks "only of student organisations" (Bianchini, 2002: 364).¹⁰⁷ For Bianchini, to be defined as a movement it must have "a sufficient influence in time and space"(Bianchini, 2002: 361).¹⁰⁸ As a result, previous student activism does not fall into the definition. "Consequently, a spatially limited mobilisation confined to a few individuals does not correspond to the definition used here" (Bianchini, 2002: 361).¹⁰⁹ Bianchini locates the origin of the student movement to a demonstration in 1966. The 28 February demonstration of students against the USA and British embassies took place following the coup that removed Nkrumah, a figurehead of radical pan-Africanism. The consequence of this movement was to overturn the existing associations and in their place emerged the *Union des Etudiants de Dakar* (UED).

6:3:2 Students and elites

Senegalese students in the 1960s and 1970s were privileged by the state, as a 'transitory' social group waiting to be allotted employment after graduation, often as members of the new state. An early study noted that "university students are disproportionately elite in background, mature and urbane in experience, and likely members of their country's social (and perhaps political) elite" (Hanna, 1975: 23). The statistics support this view. There were only 1,018 students in higher education in 1960-61 (Diop and Diouf, 1990: 190). At the University of Dakar, a survey showed that more than 27 percent of students had fathers who worked in the civil service, 22 percent

¹⁰⁶ "le mouvement social était en germe dans ces associations d'étudiants exilés"

¹⁰⁷ "seulement d'organisations étudiantes"

¹⁰⁸ "une emprise suffisante dans le temps et dans l'espace" (Bianchini, 2002: 361).

¹⁰⁹ "En conséquence, une micro-mobilisation circonscrite localement et réduite à trop peu d'individus ne correspond pas à la définition retenue ici" (Bianchini, 2002: 361). Although there may be a number of problems with Bianchini's rather rigid categorisation of a social movement, the central question for this study is *understanding* student activism and not locating the 'date definitive' of the movement. Student activism is linked to their social status and connected to the role they played in the struggle for independence.

worked in business while less than 30 percent worked in either of the country's two main occupations, farming and fishing. While it is debatable whether any of these professions were 'elitist' it is certainly true that university students were part of what have been called the *évolués* (the educated) (Foucher, 2002a) and they were to a certain extent 'pampered' by the post-colonial state.

The University of Dakar was an adjunct of the French system of higher education in the first decade of independence. Gross (1968) described it as "Dakar's Sorbonne South"¹¹⁰ and observed that students received a monthly stipend of CFAF 22,500 (US\$90), which was substantially higher than the average monthly income in Dakar. The study showed that this situation was maintained by the close partnership with the French government, which contributed 80 percent towards administration costs. Even the rector at the time of the 1968 uprising was a French civil servant. This was consistent with Senghor's desire for a university at the crossroads of African, Islamic and Western civilisation, "essentially a European, French university at the service and disposition of Africa" (quoted in Gross, 1968: 43). This relationship was borne out in enrolment figures: of 3,143 students in 1967, 737 were French, by far the largest foreign contingent. But it also represented a broader continental trend. Although the 1960s and 1970s were far from a picture of harmony there was a degree of mutual dependence:

African states were vitally dependent on students to fill the empty spaces left by departing expatriates, and saw the expansion of Higher Education as a key condition for economic development (Federici, 2000: 91).

If graduation from the university in the 1960s did not guarantee gainful employment there was certainly a strong probability of it. In Senegal, like much of the continent, this picture began to unravel quite quickly.

There are still a number of problems with deducing that Senegalese students were simply recruited from the nation's elites. A closer look at the statistics reveals a more complex reality. Many of the students at the university in the first ten years of independence had been sponsored, where part or the full cost of education and maintenance was met by future employers, government scholarships or private

¹¹⁰ It was in fact a 'department' of the *Université de Bordeaux* (Gross, 1968).

organisations. This was the pattern across many African countries. In Senegal, 72 percent of students were sponsored.¹¹¹ Students received funding from businesses, government departments and community organisations. The expansion in university education was determined by government demand for qualified functionaries that far outstripped the supply of children from 'elite' backgrounds.¹¹² William and Judith Hanna found that most students could expect to become "respected residents of the localities in which they live" (Hanna and Hanna, 1975: 34). More than three-quarters of university students aspired not to be members of the political or business elite, but on the contrary to go into a profession or to work as a government official.¹¹³ It is precisely the connection to society at large, combined with the 'physical' space of the university, that defined their activism.

In surveys of Senegalese students at the University of Dakar they emerge as extremely confrontational. A total of 74 percent of students from the university (higher than any other country) stated that they had basic disagreements with the leaders of the country (Hanna and Hanna, 1975). One study asserted that this figure could not be generalised across Africa, as students in Dakar have a particular penchant for disruption (Hanna, 1975: 266). The revolt in 1968 that spread from the university to the trade union movement must certainly be a mystery for academics, who have traditionally seen African universities as the centre for producing the national ruling class (O'Brien, 1996). William Hanna was even forced to admit: "Students at the University of Dakar were able to influence the Senegalese government in part because of the support received from labour unions" (Hanna, 1975:21). The trade union movement joined the student movement because of the rise in the price of basic commodities and high unemployment. These were real concerns shared by both groups.

The number of students in higher education in Senegal had also expanded; by 1978/79 it had reached 10,000 (Diop and Diouf, 1990: 190). Still scholars insisted on beating the same old drum, and even in the mid-1990s Senegalese students were being characterised as spoilt youths, long after their material conditions had collapsed: "The

¹¹¹ At the University of Ibadan 73 percent of students were sponsored.

¹¹² Between 1960 and 1981 the Senegalese civil service expanded from 6,000 to 67,000 (Foucher, 2002a: ??)

¹¹³ The expectation of 'government work', though long since an illusion, was an important theme of the election campaign in 2000, especially among students from the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* (ENS).

students' aspiration is to gain government employment, membership in the ruling elite, privilege" (Cruise O'Brien, 1996: 65). The reality of student life in Senegal and the nature and meaning of their activism could not contrast more with these stereotypes. The events that took place in 1968, could not demonstrate this more clearly.

6:3:3 The spirit of 1968

According to most authors the student movement now entered into a period of 'anti-imperialist struggle' (Bathily *et al*, 1995).¹¹⁴ It is not possible to regard the experience of 1968 in Senegal in isolation; a wave of protest movements, strikes and political activity gripped the international political scene (Harman, 1988). In Senegal the signs of political change had been present for some time, notably with the formation of UED in 1966 and the *Union Démocratique des Etudiants Sénégalais* (UDES) which had replaced the two former organisations of the student body. UED was founded on 30 March, a month after the student demonstrations in support of Kwame Nkrumah.

The university was at the centre of the crisis that shook the regime in 1968. The student strikes and demonstrations even managed to 'detach' the trade union movement from its traditional base inside the structures of the ruling party. This rupture did not last long and by 1969 the regime had managed to reorganise the trade union movement. However, the events of 1968 were colossal (Bathily, 1992; Bianchini, 1988). From mid-April that year students had explicitly linked their struggle at the university to wider social demands. Nor was the movement simply a reflection of events in France. Bathily (1992) notes that the first student strike in March started before events in France, although the two movements were very closely linked. Students explicitly drew attention to the high prices of food staples, the fall in the standard of living, graduate unemployment and the extent of foreign ownership and control of domestic industry. On 1 May the organised working class in the officially recognised trade union congress, *l'Union Nationale des Travailleurs Sénégalais* (UNTS) adopted the political slogans of the student movement (Bathily, 1992).

¹¹⁴ An idea taken up by Bathily although criticised by Bianchini.

On demonstrations the crowd declared: “Power to the people: freedom for unions,” “We want work and rice” (*Le Soleil*, 2001a)¹¹⁵ The collision of student and working class demands culminated in the general strike that started on 31 May. Between 1-3 June:

we had the impression that the government was vacant ... ministers were confined to the administrative buildings ... and the leaders of the Party and the State hid in their houses! ¹¹⁶ (Bathily, 1992: 80).

Students precipitated and galvanised the action: “Everybody seemed to agree with the students, the cost of living had become so expensive” ¹¹⁷ (*Le Soleil*, 2001a).

In a society often regarded as conservative, the movement produced unity that perhaps had not been seen since independence. National radio for the first time became regarded as “an ideological device in the service of the government” ¹¹⁸ (*Le Soleil*, 2001a). The government reacted to the strike by ordering the army onto the university campus, with instructions to shoot on sight. During a demonstration after these events, workers and students decided to march to the presidential palace, which was protected by the army. Later Senghor was reputedly forced to flee. French troops commanded by the despised Bigeard openly intervened, occupying key installations in the town, the airport, the presidential palace and of course the French embassy. The university was closed, foreign students were sent home, 3,500 students were arrested. *Les Daistes*, students who supported a leading and imprisoned figure of the opposition, Mamadou Dia, were put under tight surveillance. At the same time Senghor alluded to the ‘foreign’ manipulation of the movement, as France was gripped by a similar crisis, a peculiar accusation from someone who had just called on the support of a foreign military force (Bathily, 1992).

¹¹⁵ ‘Le pouvoir au peuple: liberté syndicale’, ‘Nous voulons du travail et du riz’

¹¹⁶ “on avait l’impression que le pouvoir était devenu vacant ... les ministres avaient été consignés aux buildings administratifs ... et de hauts responsables du parti et de l’Etat s’étaient cachés dans leurs maisons!”

¹¹⁷ “Tout le monde semble être d’accord avec les étudiants, tant la vie est devenu trop chère” (*Le Soleil*, 28 February 2001).

¹¹⁸ “un appareil idéologique au service du gouvernement.”

6:3:4 Politics, reorganisation and structural adjustment

The events of 1968 transformed Senegal and produced the personalities and parties that went on to dominate the country's political scene. The period was marked by traumatic changes in student organisations: the dissolution of the UED in 1971 led to the creation of the *Association Générale des Etudiants Sénégalais* (AGES) in 1972 and rapid dissolution in 1973, the year of an important student strike. The experience after 1968 was a direct consequence of the social turmoil that the year had caused.¹¹⁹ Even after the formal dissolution of AGES, it managed to exist underground until the creation of UES in 1976. The generation of university students who had experienced the political mobilisation from 1968 was influenced (and inspired) by 'external' politics, forces and actors. Pascal Bianchini sees the decade of 1977 to 1987 as the 'Patriotique' period, which saw the emergence of initiatives for the reorganisation of the student movement.¹²⁰ The period between 1977 and 1984 was marked by a remarkable degree of political in-fighting amongst student groups (Bianchini, 1997).¹²¹

In 1984 a university strike managed, to a certain extent, to bring together the various unions that had emerged within the *Comité de lutte* (Action Committee). It was not wholly effective: the different organisations took a different perspective to the negotiations and it weakened the representatives of the unions (Bianchini, 1997: 340). These confusions were very real. One organisation called for a return to class before

¹¹⁹ There was the formation of small left groups: e.g. 1) the *Mouvement de la Jeunesse Marxiste Léniniste* (MJML) (founded immediately after 1968 and affiliated to the *Parti Communiste Sénégalais*); 2) Blondinistes (regarded as 'situationists', the group attacked the French Cultural Centre. The name comes from two brothers, one, Omar Blondin Diop played a role in the movement in France in 1968 and was arrested and eventually died under arrest. That led to further student unrest, forcing the government to produce, in 1973, *Livre Blanc sur le suicide d'Oumar Blondin Diop*); 3) Xare Bi (a Maoist group including the current leader of And Jeff, Landing Savane); the leading left organisation PAI also underwent an intense period of internal debate over the 'trauma' of 1968, resulting in a split in the organisation in 1974 (Bianchini, 1997: 338).

¹²⁰ *Collectif d'Initiative pour la Réorganisation du Mouvement Etudiant Sénégalais* (CIRMES) composed of members elected by an Assemblée Générale held on the 16 November 1978. This in turn led to the creation of *Groupe d'Action pour la Reconstruction du Mouvement Etudiant Sénégalais* (GARMES). Following the publication of a manifesto, the *Union Nationale Patriotique des Etudiants Sénégalais* (UNAPES) was founded in March 1979 (Bianchini, 1997: 339).

¹²¹ The *Union Nationale Démocratique des Etudiants du Sénégal* (UNDES) emerged after a particularly disruptive political dispute as a rival to And Jef. UNDES brought together activists from PAI (the PIT from 1981) while the *Union Démocratique des Etudiants de Dakar* (UEDD) grouped militants of the *Ligue Démocratique* and finally the *Collectif* formed the RND with several Trotskyists (Bianchini, 1997: 339-341).

negotiations, and when the *Comité de lutte* called for an end to the strike the ‘base’ refused to follow the ‘instruction’ (*mot d’ordre*), considering that their representatives had sacrificed the student demands for ‘vague promises’ (*vagues promesses*). The strike continued ‘from below’ for a few days longer.¹²²

According to the principal study on the period (Coulon, 1983), Islam was not present on campuses. However, by the end of the 1970s, the mourides, the principal Muslim brotherhood in Senegal, influenced important activists. By the 1980s groups like the *Association des Etudiants Musulmans de l’Université de Dakar* (AEMUD) emerged, although it is doubtful that they had an influence on the direction of the movement. By 1987 a mosque had been built on the campus, which owes more to the relation of the government at the time to Muslim countries. Yet, it seems that Muslim activism did not directly engage with the student movement and the defection of student leaders to the ‘dahrisus’ (religious associations) was very rare (Diouf, 2002).

It was not until 1987 that the movement re-launched itself. The *Coordination des Etudiants* (CED) emerged from the January 1987 university strike and rapidly became the effective representative body between the students and the government during the strike. On the 26 May that year an order was sent demanding the dissolution of the various unions. As one of the student leaders at the time, Mamadou Bocum, recalls, “Thinking about it, we realised that the existence of a national union was a hinderance ... for the reorganisation of the movement” (*Le Soleil*, 2001a).¹²³

This represented an important development in other ways. The CED was founded on the *Assemblée Générale* – mass general meetings of the student body that became the main organising body of the student union. It also marked the emergence of the *Parti Démocratique Sénégalais* onto the student scene (formed in 1974), a political world that had previously been dominated by parties of the left (notably And Jef and the *Ligne Démocratique*). It is important to emphasise that students remained militants in political parties, even in the period of unity under the CED. Membership of political parties was

¹²² For an example of this conflict see *Le Comité de Concertation Assainissons Nos Rangs* February 1984..

¹²³ “Après analyse, nous nous sommes rendus compte que l’existence des unions nationales constitue un handicap ... pour la réorganisation du mouvement.”

always a feature of student politics. While often crippling political mobilisation, it frequently animated and organised student activism.

The development of the CED was good preparation for 1988. Students played an important role in the protests against the disputed election results in February 1988. Students appealed to wider society: “our claims are only the reflection of those of the masses”¹²⁴ (Le Soleil 2001a). However the claim was repeated that external forces were manipulating the students. Their demand for the release of political prisoners was seen as proof of this manipulation. Certain activists have identified the role of school students and, in this contest, the leading role of the university. Oumy Ndour questions Bianchini’s assertion that the movement started at the university: “historically school students have taken a leading role. In 1988 we were radicalised in Thiès and it was there that the strike spread to other schools and colleges” (Interview, 9 March 2001).¹²⁵ Before long the government moved to ban the *Assemblées Générales*, leading to the establishment, again like the movement in 1968, of *Comités de Quartier*. These were neighbourhood groups that were set up to relay information outside the university. They continued to exist until the summer. It also brought about a connection with school students who established the *Coordination des Elèves du Sénégal* (CES).

An ex-student leader from the time recalls the vitality of the movement and the crucial role played by university students, even after the university had officially been closed. When the university was closed students were crucial in animating and organising the *comités de quartiers*. Assane Dia explains:

we were going to the neighbourhoods and we rallied the people, we met with politicians, trade unionists and we explained our movement. We also visited the Imams, the ‘notables’ to pass on information. We even went to mosques to discuss with people, to speak to them, in markets to explain our position (Interview, 4 February, 2004).¹²⁶

¹²⁴ “nos revendications ne sont que le reflet de celles des masses” (see also Diop and Diouf, 1990).

¹²⁵ The traditional solidarity shown by college and *lycée* students to the university is a classic feature of student politics in Senegal. Solidarity between the various institutions is repeated on the occasion of every strike and protest – and this includes the *lycées*, *collèges* and *écoles primaires*. The division so often made between university politics and other students in the education sector may be questioned (Foucher, 2002b).

¹²⁶ ‘nous descendions dans les quartiers et nous mobilisons les gens, nous rencontrons les hommes politiques, les syndicalistes et nous leur expliquons notre mouvement. ‘nous allions également rencontrer

Students were key to disseminating the movement's objectives from their *revendications* to wider social demands. Dia explains how they organised demonstrations, "We decided to go to the streets, for example, to demonstrate. There were people in charge of smashing cars, others in charge of leading the rally, others indicating the presence of cops."¹²⁷ Students acted repeatedly as 'agents provocateurs' during the crisis, stirring up trouble:

There is a very important element, a very useful strategy, I remember that we used to go to the stadiums. Myself it happened that I went to stadiums, like Demba Diop stadium, during the night, because there were matches at that time. When there was a match, we used to arrange to be as a group but we dispersed, meaning that the group did not go together, some were going this way, others another way. After the match we used to follow the defeated team because they were upset and together with the mass we shouted 'fed up with Abdou Diouf' ... as the defeated team were angry following their defeat it increased this anger. The policemen in charge of security when they heard that ... immediately they were throwing grenades ... Really it was very important. The movement was so intense that Abdoulaye Wade was scared it would go beyond his objectives (Interview, 4 February 2004).¹²⁸

The success of the CED extended to the organisation of the university, where students were able to influence the election of the vice-principal and influence elections of departmental '*amicales*'. However there was a combination of factors that presented the CED with a number of problems. These included both the evolution of the political opposition in Senegal and most significantly the effect of the World Bank in higher education who explicitly regarded the "opposing power of students [as] ... one of the causes of the blockage of the university system" (Bianchini, 2002:345).¹²⁹

les Imams, les notables pour faire passer l'information. Nous allions mêmes dans les mosquées pour discuter avec les gens, pour leur parler, dans les marchés pour expliquer notre position.'

¹²⁷ 'nous décidions de descendre dans la rue, par exemple, pour manifester, il y avait des gens qui étaient chargés de casser des voitures, d'autres chargés d'organiser les directives de la marche, d'autres qui nous informaient de la présence des flics.'

¹²⁸ 'Il y a un élément très important, une stratégie très utile, je me rappelle que nous allions dans les stades, moi-même il m'est arrivé d'aller dans les stades comme le stade Demba Diop pendant la nuit parce qu'il y a des matchs qui se déroulaient à cette heure. Quand il y avait un match on s'arrangeait pour être un groupe mais on se dispersait c'est-à-dire que le groupe n'allait pas ensemble, les uns passait par ici, les autres par là. Après le match on suivait l'équipe vaincue parce qu'elle était énervée et on était ensemble avec la masse et on criait 'Abdou Diouf y en a marre' ... comme les vaincus étaient nerveux suite à leur défaite ça augmentait leur nervosité. Les policiers chargés de la sécurité quand ils entendaient cela ... immédiatement ils lançaient des grenades ... Vraiment c'était très important, le mouvement était tellement intense que Maître Abdoulaye Wade avait eu peur à un certain moment.'

¹²⁹ "contre-pouvoir étudiant a été ... comme des causes supplémentaires de blocage de la machine universitaire" (Bianchini, 2002: 345). The World Bank identified the student movement and their 'efficient militancy' as one of the hurdles to be over come, "L'Université de Dakar consacre chaque

To start with the first of these two issues. The role of the PDS in the university was a significant factor in the evolution of the CED and the development of the opposition to the ruling party. The growth of the PDS in the student movement was linked to the fact that the party had emerged as the principal opposition to the PS. The centrality of their popular and charismatic leader, Abdoulaye Wade, was an important factor in the growth of the PDS on the campus. Wade had long identified students as an important constituency and would repeatedly appeal to them, making much of his own background in student politics years before (*L'Étudiant Libéral*, 1995).

The second factor in the decline of the CED was the central issue confronting the movement in the 1990s. The principal report of the World Bank in 1992 initiated the launch of reforms at the university. The aim was essentially to reduce the cost of the university for the state, but they realised this would not be easy:

It is clear that implementing such a strategy would meet a lot of resistance from those that currently profit from the generous policy of access and subsidies ... it would be wiser to adopt a more conciliatory strategy of transition (World Bank, 1992: vii).¹³⁰

The report stressed that it was necessary to launch a marketing campaign, which would have the benefit of 'hiding' the real nature of the agenda. At the heart of the reform and typical of World Bank thinking across Africa (see Chapter 4) was the need to limit the intake of students into higher education: "it is better to exercise control over student access to higher education rather than through internal efficiency plans"¹³¹ (World Bank 1992: 32). As Bianchini (1997) observed, this meant that the baccalauréat – the normal pathway into higher education – would not automatically open the doors of the university. The World Bank was targeting what had been the core demands of the

année cinq fois plus d'argent à l'achat de médicaments pour les étudiants et leur famille qu'à l'acquisition de livres et de périodiques pour la bibliothèque. Cette répartition des ressources est révélatrice du changement progressif du rôle de l'université, et par la suite de l'accroissement incontrôlé des effectifs et du militantisme efficace des étudiants" (World Bank, 1992: 31)

¹³⁰ Il est clair que l'application d'une telle stratégie rencontrerait beaucoup de résistance de la part de ceux qui bénéficient actuellement de la généreuse politique d'accès et de subvention ... il serait plus judicieux d'adopter une stratégie de transition conciliante."

¹³¹ "un meilleur contrôle des cohortes d'étudiants tant au niveau de l'accès à l'enseignement supérieur que sur le plan de l'efficacité interne."

student movement over thirty years: grants, accommodation, cost of food and medical insurance.

Among the measures suggested were the privatisation of certain restaurant facilities and their annual closure for a month, the reorganisation of student accommodation – where rooms were to be allocated according to academic results and the general increase in the cost of enrolment. While many of the reforms were ‘marketed’ as experimentation, they soon became central features of the university. Student canteens were to undergo a period of limited and experimental private management, but before long the measure had become generalised across the university system. By December 1993 the government had decided to implement many of the reforms.

The two principal forces opposing the creeping privatisation of the university were the CED and the independent trade union *Syndicat Autonome des Enseignants du Supérieur* (SAES) which had been created in 1985. Teachers in SAES went on strike in May 1994 against the implementation of these reforms, and the CED supported them. The government ‘invalidated’ the academic year, which was the equivalent of making all students retake the year. On 2 August, as a result of continuing unrest, the government gave students twenty-four hours to evacuate their accommodation at the university.

The government had taken the initiative and managed to disorientate the opposition. In October, when students returned, the CED attempted to re-launch the action, but following the evacuation of the university in August the student base was poorly organised. When leading activists attempted to mount a final confrontation they were quickly dispersed by heavy police presence. The result of the defeat was catastrophic for CED; they were unable to recover from the crisis and dissolved themselves several months later. The teachers’ union, while managing to survive, emerged weakened and divided. The result for the government and the World Bank was an unqualified victory.

Even among members of the university who had initially not been hostile to the ‘pact’ - the *Programme d’Amélioration de l’Enseignement Supérieur* (PAES) - made with the World Bank and the government, began to see the organisation in a critical light. It appeared that once the Bank had obtained the reforms that they had insisted on –

principally the reduction in the number of students admitted to the university¹³² - they failed to carry out their side of the pact, refusing to substantially rehabilitate the university (Bianchini, 2000:72).¹³³

The movement was showing signs of recovering in late 1990s. The lecturers' strike – for an improvement in their housing expenses – in 1997 breathed life into the movement, and gave space and confidence to the student movement to re-emerge, this time reorganised as the *Comité de Gestion de la Crise* (CGC). By 1998 students had started to mobilise again; the strike at the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* (ENS) represented the recovery of the movement. Students in both Dakar and Saint Louis brought forward a series of demands – centred typically on the question of the grant and university fees. In Saint Louis police firing live rounds seriously injured several students on the 5 May. At the same time there was also the emergence for the first time of an additional factor. Administrative, technical and scientific staff organised themselves with the *Coordination des Syndicats des Travailleurs du Supérieur* (CSTS). Against this background the university authorities convened a General Assembly on the 10 June 1998, which declared a '*réforme de la réforme*' – referring to the reforms initiated by the World Bank six years earlier. Opposition to PAES succeeded in bring together a considerable force opposed to the continued restructuring of the university.

There are two issues that directly impinge on the study: firstly the effect of the World Bank reforms on the student movement and secondly the impact of the student movement after 1998 and the election of Abdoulaye Wade. The second issue is taken up in the following sections, but it is clear that the cycle of mobilisation restarted with the lecturers' strike in 1997 that led to both the mobilisation of student and university workers the following year. On the first point the picture is uneven. The success of the *Concertation Nationale* launched by the World Bank disorientated the movement, and succeeded to wear-down student and trade union opposition. Students were effective in defining 'corporatist' interests but less successful in mapping an alternative strategy to the crisis (Bianchini, 2000). However students did manage to ameliorate the worse proposals of the World Bank.

¹³² From 23,000 students in 1993-94 to 20,000 in 1995-96 (Bianchini, 2000:72).

¹³³ These criticisms came from students and lecturers.

6:3:5 The rise and fall of student mobilisation in Senegal

The most recent and important work on the student movement in Senegal (Bianchini, 2002; 2004) argues that there have been three broad phases: the first, the period of confrontation led by the UED from 1965-75; the second from 1979-86 led by UNAPES; and the third from 1987-95 under the direction of the CED. Each phase is marked by its own specific demands and the mobilization is marked by a specific type of student organisation, partly determined by the political context. Then, according to Bianchini (2002), follows a period of decline until the cycle of mobilisation resumes. Within these phases are periods of great repression and acute crisis. There is an important generational element to Bianchini's demarcation: "From the view point of older generations who have 'made' the student movement, the natural inclination is to valorise the student movement of their youth to the detriment of the one that followed" (2002: 372).¹³⁴ This is an important consideration, since the former generation will consider that the movement has become 'corporatist', lacking the ideological and political clarity of their generation, while today's students regard the former ones as having been integrated into the political establishment. As Bianchini puts it, "To attempt a 'geological' metaphor, the action of the Senegalese student movement can be compared to an eruption, in which materials in fusion end up cooling down and add up to the pre-existing bedrock of power."¹³⁵

One of the principal problems of this categorisation is also one of its strengths. It illustrates the evident resilience of the movement and its ability to recover from internal and external crises by forging new organisations to unify mobilisation at the university. It also undermines certain 'generational' critiques of the movement that regard the current mobilisation as irredeemably 'corporatist' (see section 4:6 above), depoliticised and in some analyses without a future (see Bathily *et al*, 1995). Student action has proved more resilient; students still play their role as politically privileged actors. However, in showing the cycles of student mobilisation, it fails to illustrate the divergence between each phase. While there are elements of 'corporatist' demands at

¹³⁴ "Du point de vue des anciennes générations qui ont 'fait' le mouvement étudiant, l'inclination naturelle est de valoriser le mouvement étudiant de leur jeunesse, au détriment de celui qui lui a succédé."

¹³⁵ "Au risque d'une métaphore 'géologique' l'action du mouvement étudiant sénégalais peut alors être comparée à une activité éruptive dont les matériaux en fusion finissent par refroidir et ainsi se juxtaposer au socle de pouvoir préexistant" (Bianchini, 1997: 352).

each stage of these mobilisations, the prevailing political situation has a profound effect on the direction of the movement. There is the danger of conflating the experiences of 1968 and the 1990s for example, which downplays the impact of structural adjustment and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc. Soviet communism, after all, sustained the political motivation of most political parties active on the campus in the 1970s and 1980s. The rise of the PDS and the domination, especially after 1993, of Wade's supporters in the student movement was possible because of the political disorientation after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. This is of central importance to the re-emergence of the movement after its decline in 1995.

Yet the strength of Bianchini's analysis is unquestionable. There are two vital and related aspects to his work. First he criticises the 'generational approach' that denigrates the contemporary movement by looking at student mobilisations through the prism of a golden age of activism. He is dismissive of the way that history has been written to justify contemporary and partisan events: "We then see the 1968 student movement in Senegal presented as an introduction to the 'democratic' wave of the late 1980s"¹³⁶ (Bianchini, 2002: 386). Secondly, he stresses the centrality of 'corporatist' demands throughout the movement, criticising the argument that these are a contemporary feature of the degeneration of the movement. This argument was also made against the student movement in Zimbabwe (see section 5:3:7 above).

This issue requires some explanation. The question of the grant has been a central issue for the movement. Students were not immediately galvanised into political action in 1968 to effect revolutionary change, or because they had been reading Lenin (although undoubtedly some had). On the contrary it was the reduction of the grant, or more specifically its *fractionnement*, which triggered the action. Almost twenty years later it was the late payment of the grant that led to the strike in January 1987. The reality is that 'economic' demands have always been central to mobilising students, and even

¹³⁶ "On voit ainsi le mouvement étudiant de 1968 au Sénégal présenté comme annonciateur de la vague 'démocratique' de la fin des années 1980" (Bianchini, 2002:386).

more so since the economic crisis.¹³⁷ Yet the generation of 1968 (and 1988) still denigrate the movement and students today.¹³⁸

6:3:6 Conclusion

As we have seen in much of the literature on the student movement there is a tendency to search for clear demarcations in student activism. A typical caricature is the separation of student activism from its perceived heyday in the 1960s and 1970s to the disintegration of the movement during the last twenty years. Today students are written off, “left with their daily corporatism and the inefficiency of their fights” (Bathily, Diouf and Mbodji 1995: 401). Yesterday they were harbingers of a brighter future: “If prior to World War II students tacitly accepted being petty bourgeois with colonial linkages, up to the mid-1970s they claimed a left vanguard status” (Bathily *et al*, 1994: 401).

The argument asserts that with the collapse of the post-colonial ‘social pact’ the struggles student engage in have become ‘corporatist’, daily ones, concerned only with bread and butter. “By the late 1970s Senegalese students saw themselves more modestly as symbols of the independent stalemate, of the political and economic failure of a regime which was unable to provide them with clear survival prospects.” Students, following this argument, have lost their status “from providers of modernity they became aid applicants” (Bathily *et al*, 1994: 402). This is a general theme in the literature.

It has been shown that it is not entirely satisfactory to divide the Senegalese student movement into its political ‘vanguardist’ phase and a later ‘economist’ one. After the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, a generation of intellectuals and leaders lost their ideological signposts. This applies as much to the political left in Senegal as it does

¹³⁷ The erosion of student ‘spending power’ has led to the ‘proletarianisation’ of the student body. In 1968 the full grant was 22,500 F (Bathily, 1992: 173) and by 1981 the half-grant – that three quarters of eligible students received – was only 12,000 F.

¹³⁸ At a joint meeting organised by And Jeff and *Ligue Démocratique* on 20 March 2004 in Dakar, the spokesperson of AJ and minister Mamadou Diop Decroix concluded the meeting by referring to an event in October 1968 when Bathily – then Secretary General of UED – was offered overseas scholarships for the student leadership by Senghor. The ‘movement’ refused, according to Decroix – but presumably there was less need for such things at the time. He finished the story by commenting (to much hilarity) that today’s students could not boast similar principles.

anywhere. This has left its mark on social movements across the world. Although the political and material world at Cheikh Anta Diop University in the late 1990s and early part of the new century was notable for the lack of political debate, the celebrated vanguardism of the 1970s was a consequence of the collision of forces that are not present today. This does not preclude the development of these politics today, nor explain the important role students continued to play as privileged political actors in the historical victory of *sopi*, in 2000, even without old ideologies (typically various forms of Stalinism).

This part of the chapter has attempted to show, firstly, that many of the old categories and labels used to describe students were always awkwardly worn by Senegalese students and, secondly, to chart the evolution of the student movement. Students in Senegal have not collapsed into a crude corporatism, although their action has been transformed by the policies of structural adjustment (the proletarianisation of their social status). They still comprise a contradictory and potentially powerful political force. Deme Abdoulaye – one of the principal leaders of the student movement in the period of *l'alternance* – admits in an unpublished text generally very disparaging of student action, “as you know if the students are organised, it can constitute a danger for the state if they do not take their claims into account ... it can even lead to the fall of the system” (Abdoulaye, 2002).¹³⁹ The following part of the chapter attempts to analyse the experience of students after 1998, examining the tensions and pressures on the movement in a period of intense political change.

6:4 ‘Changement politique’: student protest and activism in Senegal 1998-2004

The next part of this chapter concentrates on the experiences and role of students in the election – the democratic transition – that took place in 2000. It analyses how students reorganised their university union in preparation for the elections and the campaign trail – the *marche bleue* – of Abdoulaye Wade in 2000. The following sections address three important moments at the university. The first was a university strike in 1999 that precipitated the collapse of the union. The second period was student action at the university in the election of Wade in 2000 and the final period was the key strike on the

¹³⁹ ‘car, comme vous le savez, si les étudiants sont organisés, cela peut constituer un danger pour l’Etat qui ne prend pas en charge leurs revendications ... jusqu’à même conduire à la chute d’un régime.’

campus a year after the election. Later sections examine the nature of student participation in the new government and the ways in which many ex-student militants were corrupted and co-opted by the regime. The years 1998 to 2004 involved the culmination of years of political change, encapsulated by the popular slogan of the movement, *sopi*. Focusing on these years helps unpick the nature of student activism in periods of democratic change.

6:4:1 The 'silent' revolution

Senegal in recent years has undergone a silent revolution that is hardly mentioned, let alone analysed, in the international media. It has come in two parts. The first part came with the victory of Abdoulaye Wade after a bitterly fought two-round presidential election held in March 2000. This marked one of the few times that there has been a peaceful transition of power in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite widespread fears of another crisis, the former president Abdou Diouf stepped down, signalling the end of 40 years in power for a party renamed in 1975 the Socialist Party. The second part was the legislative elections held on the 29 April 2001, when the former ruling party was reduced to a handful of seats. They were left without the control of a single region or department, even in areas regarded as their strongholds (*Walfadjri*, 2001; *Le Soleil*, 2001).¹⁴⁰

Since independence Senegal has been regarded by commentators as a 'semi-democracy' and by most Senegalese as a one party state (Diop and Diouf, 1990). The movement for political change, in which 'youth' and students in particular played a leading role, was often regarded as facing insurmountable opposition. The political class was tied inextricably to leading *marabouts* (spiritual guides), which held the allegiance of much of the rural population and the groundnut industry. The break with these traditions holds significant lessons for democratic change beyond Senegal. But one must look behind the election to see the forces responsible for this change, notably the general strike in 1999 that continued despite the attempt of Madia Diop, the General Secretary of the *Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs du Sénégal* (CNTS), to call off the strike. But

¹⁴⁰ In Tambacouda and Bakel for example, Wade's party, the PDS, secured 90 seats and the former ruling Socialist Party only 10 (*Walfadjri*, 2001).

clearly the role of students before, during and after the presidential elections has been a significant force in the silent revolution.

The commitment of students to the movement for *sopi* is seen as crucial to the election of the new regime, and the ‘alliance’ between the student movement and the new president Abdoulaye Wade was a vital element in the politics of the government after his victory. In the anniversary celebrations commemorating four years since the victory of *l’alternance*, one of the principal achievements highlighted by the government were university reforms:

In the area of education the new government has achieved an important victory. We have been able to give to all students a grant or, at least, assistance equivalent to a grant. This is proof of the importance that we attach to education (*Le Soleil*, 19 March 2004).¹⁴¹

These reforms necessitated the regime ‘breaking’ from the advice of the World Bank, which had insisted that the government limit the intake of students into the university sector.

However these reforms were wrung out of the regime in the aftermath of a university strike in January and February 2001 that led to the death of the law student Balla Gaye. This was the first major crisis faced by the new government, and it still divides national life. The strike was fought over issues that student leaders claimed Wade had promised to resolve after the presidential election in 2000. The national newspaper, *Le Matin*, wrote in the aftermath of the Balla Gaye’s death: “No-one can predict what the stars will hold for students in the next few years. However everyone remembers that May 1968 started like this” (2001).¹⁴² So within a year students boasted that they were the ‘new opposition’ to the government. The astonishment was tangible: “last year ... the same students who today have been attacked by the police ... had rallied to Abdoulaye Wade.” (*Le Matin* 2001).¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ “Dans le domaine de l’enseignement, une grande réussite est également à mettre au compte de l’alternance. C’est le fait que nous ayons pu accorder à tout étudiant une bourse ou, au moins, une aide équivalente à une bourse. C’est la prévision de l’importance que nous accordions à l’éducation.”

¹⁴² “Nul ne peut prédire quel sort les étoiles réserveront aux étudiants dans les prochaines années mais tout le monde se souvient que Mai 68 est passé par là.”

¹⁴³ “l’année dernière ... les même étudiants, qui aujourd’hui ont été pris à partie par les policiers ... avaient fait un triomphe à Me Abdoulaye Wade.”

6:4:2 Preparing the structures: striking in 1999

Although the student movement had been unsuccessful in contesting World Bank reforms, it succeeded in limiting the more harmful effects of these reforms. By 1999 students were organised in the *Comité de Gestion de Crise* (CGC), a university-wide union, grouping together department ‘*amicales*’. However, for a number of student leaders the CGC was already a moribund organisation that needed to be replaced with a new union that would be able to respond to the rapid political changes that were taking place in Senegal.

Students organised a strike between February and April 1999 that became crucial in shaping the nature of student participation in the *sopi* campaign and in moulding a new national student union that would organise student activism in the coming year. There had been a number of very significant events that impacted on the political consciousness of students, developments that led many to conclude that there was now a significant opportunity to remove the *Parti Socialiste* from power. The PS was severely damaged by the resignation in 1998 of two of their political heavy weights, Mustapha Niasse and Djibo Ka, who went on to form their own political parties. The effect was to harden the sense that change was finally possible. These possibilities weighed heavily on student activists in 1999 as they became aware of the need to forge unity in the student body – and if necessary a new union – to help secure *changement politique* the following year.

The first three months of the year were dominated by the desire to find ‘la candidature unique’ to contest the presidential elections in 2000. The university professor and leader of the left-wing *Ligue Démocratique - Mouvement pour le Parti du Travail* (LD/MPT) Abdoulaye Bathily led the charge, heading the coalition of opposition parties determined to find a single candidate. The *Alliance des Forces du Changement pour l’Alternance* (AFCA) and the *Bloc Républicain pour le Changement* (BRC) were set up to organise the opposition, with many arguing that Wade was the only candidate who had sufficient support to beat the ruling party (*Sud Quotidien*, 1999a). Newspapers were monopolised by reports of the opposition regrouping around Wade, ‘*Six partis votent Me Wade*’ (six parties vote for Wade) reported the headline in the *Sud Quotidien* on 8

February 1999. The youth organisations of the nation's major political parties, organised in the *Coordination des Jeunesses Politiques de l'Opposition* (CJPO), failed in their attempts to agree on a 'single candidate'. Instead the organisation in their meeting on the 6 February 1999 split along party lines. However the youth and student movements of *Mouvement pour le Socialisme et l'Unité* (MSU), *And Jeff - Parti Africain pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme* (AJ – PAD), the LD, the PDS and the *Union pour la Démocratie et le Fédéralisme* (UDF) voted to support Wade, while the youth wing of the *Union pour le Renouveau Démocratique* (URD) rejected the choice and proposed their own party leader Djibo Leyti Ka. This political split – among youth, students and political parties – continued throughout the presidential campaign with Djibo Ka and Mustapha Niasse of the *Alliance des Forces du Progrès* (AFP) standing in the presidential elections (*Sud Quotidien*, 1999c).¹⁴⁴

The student strike started on the 24 February. There were a number of key demands. The CGC held an *Assemblée Générale* where they demanded the increase in student grants – from CFA18,000 to CFA25,000 for half grants and CFA36,000 to CFA45,000 for a full grants, and an increase also in student assistance and the distributions of grants for all those currently without state support. The strike was called together with a day of action to *frapper vite et fort* (also the slogan of the CGC, 'hit quick and hard') the authorities. The strike demands were also linked to the work of a commission at the Ministry of Education responsible for analysing the situation at the university. The leadership of CGC was angry at the lack of progress made by the commission (*Sub Quotidien*, 1999d). But the daily *Sud Quotidien* also made reference to the explicitly party political dimension motivating the strike: "But there is also a political factor ... because according to our sources the students who, for the most part, organise politically do so to accompany the activity of the parties that they are members of" (1999d).¹⁴⁵

The question of *la candidature unique* (a single candidate) continued to dominate the press. Again Bathily, who pressed for the candidature of Wade, took this argument to

¹⁴⁴ However at the same time political and social change – arguably more profound – was taking place. *Sud Weekend* reported on 16 January that the largest religious families of leading marabouts were prepared to break from the ruling party, '*Après 50 années de ménage, la Séparation de corps*'.

¹⁴⁵ "Mais aussi et surtout, il y a le facteur politique ... Car, selon nos sources, les étudiants qui, pour la plupart, militent dans les formations politiques font également de l'agitation pour accompagner les actions de leur partis."

his supporters in their congress held 5-6 March (*Sud Quotidien*, 1999e). The youth wing of the PDS also initiated their first *caravane pour le changement* (caravans for change).

¹⁴⁶ It involved hired *voitures rapides* (local mini buses) and trips into rural areas to *sensibiliser les gens* (sensitise the people). The first *caravane* would be used to *sillonner* (criss-cross) the country on the 18 March and “raise the awareness of the population, even the most remote areas, on the necessity for political change in 2000” (*Sud Quotidien*, 1999e).¹⁴⁷ Students were the first to participate in these ‘caranans’.

By the middle of March two important developments had emerged in the strike. Firstly, the recalcitrant *Faculté de Médecine*, which had been on the margins of the strike joined the movement on the 12 March. Secondly, the first signs of a split in the CGC were beginning to emerge. Accusations started to circulate that certain members of the CGC had received bribes from the *Ministre de l'Education*. One member of the CGC – Ali Fary Ndiaye – made a name for himself as the spokesperson of the ‘opposition’, “certain members of the CGC are suspected of having received money (CFA 5 million) from the authorities. We insist that they explain themselves at the AG. Otherwise we will have to take action at the AG on Wednesday 17th” (*Sud Quotidien*, 1999f).¹⁴⁸

The worst crisis of the strike occurred when ‘*les forces de l'ordre*’ – the notorious *Groupement Mobile d'Intervention* (GMI) - entered the university on 15 March. One lecturer, Penda Mbow, expressed the general attitude:

This situation is scandalous. You cannot violate the university space like this and under any old pretext. The inviolability of the university sphere is something that has been acquired after years of struggle by humanity from the middle ages (*Walfadjri*, 1999a).¹⁴⁹

The event created a small political storm, leading to widespread condemnation of the violated university (see letters in *Walfadjri*, 1999a). Five students were seriously

¹⁴⁶ A system of campaigning that was absolutely central to the mobilisation of students during the presidential election the following year (see section 6:4:3 below).

¹⁴⁷ “sensibiliser les populations même les plus reculées, sur la nécessité de l’alternance en l’an 2000.”

¹⁴⁸ “certains membres du CGC sont soupçonnés d’avoir reçu de l’argent (5 millions) des autorités. Nous demandons à ce que ces derniers s’expliquent en Assemblée générale (AG). Sinon, nous allons prendre nos responsabilités lors de l’AG du Mercredi 17.”

¹⁴⁹ “Cette situation est scandaleuse. On ne peut pas violer l’espace universitaire comme cela et sous quelque prétexte que ce soit. L’inviolabilité de la sphère universitaire est un acquis qui a été conquis de haute lutte par l’humanité et cela depuis le Moyen-Age.”

injured; four rooms in the university were destroyed and the campus restaurants ransacked. Boubacar Diop of the lecturers' union, *Syndicat Autonome des Enseignants du Supérieur* (SAES), joined others in declaring that the union was determined to shine light on the incident (*Sud Quotidien*, 1999g). By the 17 March the CGC had almost completely lost control of the strike. When a rumour circulated that Mouhamadou Dieye, a first year medical student had died of injuries inflicted on the 15 March students cried “à mort les flics” (death to the police) and organised an impromptu AG.

Meanwhile the *Union des Jeunesses Travailleuses Libérales* of the PDS organised their own *caravane pour l'alternance*. Mbaye Diack of the LD spoke to the Union insisting that “If young people do not want to suffer, they must break with the *Parti Socialiste*, which has stayed in power too long.”¹⁵⁰ The organisers of the *caravane* made it clear that they would start first with Dakar, before going into the *intérieur du pays* (*Sud Quotidien*, 1999h).

By 19 March the university strike that had been limited to the university had spread to Gaston Berger and a number of schools. Yet, as the strike spread and gained support, the CGC lifted the strike *mot d'ordre*, a decision that was almost totally ignored by students. The CGC was divided, with some members pressing for a further radicalisation of the strike (*Sud Quotidien*, 1999i). The sense of disarray dominated the CGC, who asserted at a press conference (held in the HQ of the SAES) on 20 March that the strike would end on Monday 22 March. It did not and its continuation signalled the death of the union.

The CGC was torn apart by political differences connected to the radicalisation in the country as the opposition struggled to forge a coalition for *sopi*. The decision to lift the strike was a product of these divisions. Meissa Toure, who was active as a representative for his faculty, explains that it was the political divergence within the union that led to its disintegration at the time of the strike:

we had political problems because there were those from the URD and others from the PDS. Those in the PS who were there [meant that] we had political differences

¹⁵⁰ “Si la jeunesse ne veut pas vivre le calvaire, elle doit opérer une rupture avec le Parti Socialiste qui a trop duré au pouvoir.”

when the strike was lifted. There were problems in the leadership. The death of the CGC was declared in 1999 ... students were divided. One could not mobilise the student body around this organisation (Interview, 12 February 2004).¹⁵¹

Yankhouba Seydi, another leading member of the CGC and a militant of the PDS, recalled five years later, "I was among those who signed the death warrant of the CGC" (Interview, 15 March 2004).

Despite the collapse of the CGC, the strike spread to more schools and colleges, Gaston Berger declared that their strike in support of students in Dakar would continue at least until the 8 April 1999 (*Walfadjri* 1999b). While schools in Rufisque – where Dieye, the injured medical student had finished his baccalaureate – issued a similar strike order (*Sud Quotidien*, 1999j). Tension continued to mount in the country as opposition parties attempted to come together around one candidate. The 30 March was declared the decisive day in this quest; opposition parties of the AFCA and the BRC met in Wade's Dakar home. But they failed to agree on a single candidate. Djibo Ka of the URD emerged as the main splitter, refusing to support Wade's candidature. Students were quick to condemn the opposition: a geography student Khady Gning made it clear that the "failure of the negotiations to find a single candidate, [means] the opposition has little chance of winning the presidential election in 2000" (*Sud Quotidien*, 1999k).¹⁵²

Students were centrally organised in the structures of the opposition parties that were seeking to find unity. They were not simply 'puppets' of their political masters, but a political force that had been involved since the beginning of the year in the debates that had taken place across the country. It is in this context that the strike and the subsequent disintegration of the CGC must be seen. While the strike was fought over 'corporatist demands' – an increase in grants – students were also openly engaged in national politics, not simply as cheerleaders of their political parties but in agitating for the unity sought by the opposition as a whole (*Sud Quotidien*, 1999k).¹⁵³ The disintegration of

¹⁵¹ "nous avons des problèmes politiques parce qu'il y avait des gens de l'URD et des gens du PDS. Les gens du PS, qui étaient là, et nous avons des divergences politiques lorsqu'on a levé le mot d'ordre. Il y avait des problèmes entre nos dirigeants. On a décrété la mort du CGC en 1999 ... les étudiants étaient divisés. On ne pourra plus mobiliser l'ensemble des étudiants autour de cette structure."

¹⁵² "échec des négociations autour de la candidature unique, l'opposition a peu de chances de gagner la présidentielle de l'an 2000."

¹⁵³ This is often the problem in understanding student mobilisation, the false dichotomy constructed between student politics and 'national politics'. Students are divided along party lines, paralysed by these divisions and often corrupted. In these senses they follow national politics.

CGC came partly from the realisation that new structures were needed to forge the same unity among students.¹⁵⁴

Meissa Toura of the CGC made it clear that students would return to their courses after the Easter holidays. He argued that the police would now be responsible for investigating the accusation of corruption made by Ndiaya. While Ndiaya – predicting the eventual dissolution of the CGC later in the year – argued for the creation of a new union and the resumption of classes:

in my role as spokesperson of the students [and] who at the beginning was against the lifting of the strike ... I think that there are no viable reasons not to return to our courses. Students must remain vigilant in ensuring that the promises are upheld (*Sud Quotidien*, 1999l).¹⁵⁵

Within days of the strike being called off, *Un comité d'accueil* was organised to welcome *papa du sopi* (father of change) from his semi-retirement in France (where he had been for seven months). The 'welcome' was regarded as the first test for the new coalition that had come together to support his candidature, and a crucial gauge of his continuing popularity.

It was not, however, until August that students finally consolidated the reorganisation of their national union. Seydi recalls how the process came about:

We invited all the other student movements in other faculties to an AG and afterwards called the dissidents of the CGC. We moved to the *rectorat*, met the rector¹⁵⁶ and we gave him a declaration, it was clearly mentioned that the CGC was dead and from that day it was replaced by a new movement called the *Union des Etudiants de Dakar* (UED) (Interview, 18 March 2004).

However the reorganisation of the student movement was more complicated than Seydi suggests. The decision to formally dissolve the CGC was taken at a seminar on the 11 August held at the *Ecole supérieure polytechnique de Dakar*. The name of the new

¹⁵⁴ It can be said that the capacity to act as 'politically privileged actors' is not in isolation from society. On the contrary it is in their capacity to influence national politics and contribute – often decisively – to national debates and mobilisations, but not always independently.

¹⁵⁵ "en ma qualité de porte-parole des étudiant qui, au départ, étaient contre le lever du mot d'ordre ... je pense qu'il n'y a aucune raison valable de ne pas faire cours. Les étudiants doivent se battre pour que les promesses soient tenues"

¹⁵⁶ Mustapha Sourang was the Minister of Education in 2004.

structure was going to be communicated after the work of an *atelier spécial* (special workshop) to be undertaken by the *Comité d'Initiative et de Pilotage* (CIP) made up of students, many who were ex-members of the CGC. The intervention of the rector – Mustapha Sourang – was important as it was through his patronage that the seminar took place. These decisions did not go uncontested; on the contrary certain students at the seminar questioned the legitimacy of the CIP. One complained that it was simply “a group of friends, fervent activists in political parties ... members who have never been elected, they want to politicise the movement as always” (Sud Quotidien, 1999m).¹⁵⁷ While making his contribution the student pointed a finger at Pape Birame Ndiaye – a PDS deputy – in the lecture theatre demanding a justification for his presence.

Only afterwards – contrary to Seydi's tidy categorisation – was the new movement created. Partly due to the important role that the union was going to play in the following two years, student leaders of the period perhaps exaggerate their involvement in its formation. One student activist at the time Aliou Sow¹⁵⁸ remembers, “It was in fact in my room at the university that we made the decision to form UED, and replace the CGC” (Interview, 4 February 2004). Sow also illustrates another important feature of the period. As opposition parties regrouped, individual politicians formed new alliances and changed political allegiance. Students went through the same processes, as old political allegiances were cast off and new ones found, often referred to disparagingly today as *transhumance politique*.¹⁵⁹ Sow changed political allegiance so dramatically that he was attacked by former ‘comrades’ and had to be hospitalised, a story that has entered into student mythology.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ “une bande de copains, fervents militants de partis politiques ... les membres n'ont jamais été mandatés: ils cherchent à politiser le mouvement, comme toujours.”

¹⁵⁸ Sow became the youngest deputy in the legislative elections in 2001 and subsequently the youngest minister (appropriately of youth).

¹⁵⁹ Literally ‘political migration’.

¹⁶⁰ There are several versions of the story of his ‘attack’ but the important point in each version is that those who attacked him – sworn political and personal enemies at the time – are now close political friends working in the same government. For example Dethie Diouf – a long standing militant of the PS – who regarded himself as uniquely ‘incorruptible’ in the student movement, only to become a technical advisor in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

6:4:3 Election year: *sopi* and students

Students are perhaps not always accurate in assessing their role in the election victory of Wade in March 2000. Most student leaders argue that the student movement played the key role in the election. However, others argue more realistically that the election was in fact the culmination of more than twenty-five years of political activity by Wade's *Parti Démocratique Sénégalais* (PDS), political mobilisation around *sopi* and the crucial support of a coalition of mostly leftwing political parties, the private press, students and certain powerful and mostly autonomous trade unions.¹⁶¹ However, students did play a privileged – and indeed leading – role in ensuring that the rural population was mobilised to support Wade: in registering voters in rural districts and generating support for change during the second round of the election and in the *caravanes* organised by students in the year before the election. As one student, Idressa Gassama, put it: “During the campaign the university was empty. Students went to their villages and around the country ... They wanted the change and students I can say made the change” (Interview, 4 March 2001). Even when students were funded to campaign for the ruling *Parti Socialiste* they often used the funds to build further support for *papa Sopi*.

¹⁶¹ Without fear of exaggeration, the left – particularly LD-MPT and to a lesser extent AJ-PADS and the PIT – were central in organising the coalition of parties that supported Wade in the *Coalition de l'Alternance 2000*. The current (2004) national coordinator of the *Mouvement des Elèves et Etudiants de AJ-PADS* Ibrahima Ba explains that the left was aware that “the only person who could lead the coalition at that moment is Abdoulaye Wade. He was called to return but he was in Paris [1999]” [“la seule personne qui pourrait diriger en ce moment la coalition c'est Abdoulaye Wade. Et on a fait appel à lui; mais il était à Paris (1999)"]. Ba described how Wade accepted “his participation in this coalition. He agreed to front the programme that he had been involved in forming. It was a programme of the left, and he is a liberal” [“de participer à cette coalition. Et il a préféré, il a préfacé ce programme qu'on a fait avec lui. C'était un programme de gauche et lui c'est un libéral”] (Interview, 12 February 2004). There is a certain amount of wishful thinking in this account, that is as much a contemporary justification of the continuing alliance between the left (the LD and AJ) and an explicitly neo-liberal government controlled by the PDS. Bathily made a similar argument but with a historical slant: “I do not think Abdoulaye Wade is a liberal. It is important to be reminded of the way the PDS was born in 1974. After having opted for ‘socialism’ president Senghor insisted Majmont Diop (Pai) represented the communist current, Boubacar Diop (Mrs) the republican current and Abdoulaye Wade was obliged to become a ‘liberal’. I do not think most activists in the PDS know what liberalism is. But Wade is not a liberal, he is more of a socialist. He says it himself that he is against ‘unfettered’ liberalism. Never has the state been so visible in the political life of the country” [“Je ne pense pas qu'Abdoulaye Wade soit un libéral. Il faut remonter à la manière dont le PDS est né en 1974. Après avoir opté pour le socialisme le président Senghor a imposé à Majmout Diop (Pai) de prendre le courant communiste, à Boubacar Diop (Mrs) le courant républicain. Et Abdoulaye Wade a été obligé d'être libéral. Je ne pense pas que beaucoup militants du PDS savaient ce que c'est le libéralisme. Mais Wade n'est pas un libéral. Il est plus socialiste. Lui-même dit souvent qu'il est contre le libéralisme sauvage. Jamais l'Etat n'a été aussi présent dans la définition des politiques du pays”] (*Sud Quotidien*, 2003). Within a year these arguments had changed as the coalition look set to break apart (Walfadjri, 2003). None of this however should diminish the vital role the left played in bringing the right to power.

National debate in January and February 2000 was monopolised by the scandal of false electoral cards. The *Parti Socialiste* allegedly printed these cards – *fabriquées clandestinement en Israël* (made illegally in Israel) – without informing the opposition (see Walfadjri, 2000a). This scandal rumbled on throughout the campaign, threatening at one point to derail the elections and on 2 February the *Front pour la Régularité des Elections* (FRTE) – grouping the main parties supporting Wade – organised a demonstration in the centre of Dakar against the ‘fraud’ (*Sud Quotidien*, 2000a). However between the two rounds of the election the question of ‘youth’ became the predominant theme in the election (see *Sud Quotidien*, 2000b).

Students at the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* (ENS) were at the centre of this focus and received most national attention during the campaign. The central issue was over the recruitment of *normaliens* upon graduation into the teaching profession, questions that had preoccupied students from the ENS for some years (*Sud Quotidien*, 2000c). Their plight was raised to national prominence during a violent confrontation with the police on the 18 January, when one student was stabbed in the back by a police officer and thirteen others were injured. Their demands occupied a significant place in the election campaign throughout both rounds of the presidential election, with candidates being interrogated on the plight of the *normaliens* (see the interview with Abdou Diouf in Walfadjri, 2000b).

While the national press was dominated by these issues the PDS launched the *marche bleue*, initiated by the party’s second in command Idressa Seck, as the most efficient method for disseminating the party’s message. It was a campaigning ‘road show’, where Wade ‘met’ the population.¹⁶² The university welcomed the ‘*marche bleue*’ on the 12 February and Wade addressed ‘hysterical’ students shouting lyrics from the radical Ivorian singer Alpha Blondy. He set out his credentials, “former student, former

¹⁶² Seck claimed at the time that his inspiration for the *marche bleue* was partly divine, “being an assiduous reader of the Book of Saints I became aware that all the prophets who had a mission of liberation have conducted a ‘walk’ and this walk is proof of the maturity of the movement” (Walfadjri, 2000c).

professor and former dean. No-one knows your problems better than me” (*Sud Quotidien*, 2000e).¹⁶³

However in January students were still contesting the legality of the new structure that had been created the previous year. Students voiced disquiet about the new union and its capacity to mobilise students. Mor Diankha – a member of the *Amicale* of the *Faculté des Lettres* – explained:

the *Union des étudiants de Dakar* (UED) is not built on a democratic base. This is why it is unable to mobilise students. We are really eager to see the birth of the *Union Générale des Etudiants de Dakar* (UGED), an organisation where all students will come together (*Sud Quotidien*, 2000g).¹⁶⁴

The University campus erupted into political action in mid February 2000, and the strike was again ostensibly ‘corporatist’, ‘limited’ to receiving the promised reforms won by the movement the previous year. One of the leading members of the UED Yankhoba Diattara explained: “The principal point of the agreement that we signed last year with the authorities is connected to the allocation a 2/3 grant to students in the ‘second cycle’” (Walfadjri, 2000d).¹⁶⁵ Many student leaders at the time testify to the way the politics of the movement were disguised under a thin veil of bread and butter demands. Yankhoba Diatara¹⁶⁶ explains how ‘politics’ were frequently hidden in the student mobilisations at the time:

we did not lead a political strike. The strike movement was not launched to say that Abdou Diouf must leave power. No the strike was based on legitimate and legal demands. Because it was necessary to increase the numbers receiving grants, and in negotiation with the minister it was these issues that we discussed. If it had in fact been demanding the removal of Abdou Diouf, the minister would not have spoken to us (Interview, 9 February 2004).

¹⁶³ “Ancien étudiant, ancien professeur et ancien doyen, personne ne peut connaître vos problèmes mieux que moi.”

¹⁶⁴ “L’Union des Etudiants de Dakar n’est pas bâtie sur des bases démocratiques. C’est pourquoi elle n’est pas en mesure de mobiliser les étudiants. Nous sommes vraiment pressés de voir enfin naître l’*Union Générale des Etudiants de Dakar* (UGED) une structure où tous les étudiants se retrouveront.”

¹⁶⁵ “Le principal point du protocole d’accord que nous avons signé l’année dernière avec les autorités, a trait à l’attribution de 2/3 de bourses aux étudiants de second cycle.”

¹⁶⁶ Diatara was a government advisor and close associate to Idressa Seck. He resigned shortly after Seck’s high profile resignation as Prime Minister in April 2004.

Diatara goes even further in saying that “there was never any talk of the election or even Diouf or Wade during the *Assemblée Générale*.” He explains:

we were a lot more subtle than those in 1988. In 1988 they said ‘free Abdoulaye Wade’, when he was imprisoned after the events of 1988. However we wanted the change but we never said it ... we were able to lead more subtly and [as a result] students had confidence in us (Interview, 9 February 2004).¹⁶⁷

As we will see the claims of political neutrality in the public domain of the AG did not last. The desire to keep the strike ‘limited’ to corporatist demands – the typical *plate-forme des revendications* (platform of demands) – was a strategy frequently used as a reaction to the hostility towards political parties, but also as a method of keeping the university open during a ‘political’ strike.¹⁶⁸

On the eve of the first election the atmosphere at the university was ecstatic. *Walfadjri* recalled that “students demanded the *alternance* as the condition *sine qua non* of a return to class” (2000e).¹⁶⁹ The first vote of the election failed to secure Abdou Diouf the required majority, forcing a run-off for the first time in Senegalese history, between Wade and Diouf. The effect of the vote further radicalised students at the university. The vote also broke open the political debates and tensions that had been simmering under the surface. Between the elections students in MEES – *Mouvement des Elèves et Etudiants Socialistes* – composed a letter that they claimed had been written by the Campaign Director for the PDS, Idrissa Seck. In the letter Seck congratulated both Sow and Diatara on having brought the students out on strike at a critical moment during the election. The socialist students distributed copies of the letter during an AG. Diatara continues the story:

¹⁶⁷ “nous n’avions pas mené de grève politique. On n’a pas déclenché le mouvement de grève pour dire que Abdou Diouf doit partir. Non, on posait la question, on peut dire des revendications légitimes et légales. Parce qu’il fallait augmenter le nombre de boursiers etc. en étant en négociations avec le ministre c’est ça. Mais si c’était, en fait, une revendication portant essentiellement sur le départ de Abdou Diouf, le ministre ne nous recevrait pas.”

“on n’a jamais, jamais parlé en Assemblée Générale des enjeux électoraux ou bien de Diouf ou Wade.”

“On était beaucoup plus subtil au moins que ceux de 88. En 88, ils disaient ‘libérez Abdoulaye Wade’. Lorsqu’il était après les événements. Cependant on voulait l’alternance, mais, nous, on n’a jamais dit ça...on a pu gérer ça subtilement et les étudiants nous faisaient confiance”

¹⁶⁸ Equally students would often explain (Interviews January - April 2004) that they were ‘apolitique’ at the same time as expounding passionately about the country’s political situation. ‘Apolitique’ in this sense meant ‘I am not in a political party’.

¹⁶⁹ “Les étudiants exigeaient l’alternance comme condition *sine qua non* de reprise des cours.”

students read it. Then looked at us. They thought that it was true ... [but] if they had no confidence in us they would have killed us. They didn't, they had learnt by now. They said 'Oh it's those socialists' [and] they ripped up [the letter] (Interview 9 February).¹⁷⁰

This incident illustrates both the extent to which student leaders sought to avoid stepping on overtly party political territory and the tensions that were then gripping the campus.¹⁷¹

After the first round of the election student leaders were forced directly into making political declarations. Despite Diatara's claims to the contrary, he made perhaps the most political statement from the university, challenging the president to close the university. As he remembers:

Abdou Diouf had said ... that it was necessary to close the campus, otherwise it would not be possible to control the student body. After this I made a declaration on the radio – you can even get it from *Walfadjri* – saying that "If Abdou Diouf closes the campus, I will close the Presidential palace," and that was a political declaration (Interview 9 March).¹⁷²

Meissa Toura – another PDS militant from the period – concurs with Diatara. Toura argues that the strike that had begun with 'student demands' became openly political in February:

¹⁷⁰ "les étudiants ont lu. Ils nous regardaient. Ils pensaient que c'était vrai. ... s'ils n'avaient pas confiance ils allaient nous tuer, ils pouvaient nous tuer. Mais ils ne l'ont pas fait; ils ont appris ils ont dit 'Oh c'est les socialistes.' Ils ont déchiré [la lettre]."

¹⁷¹ There were a number of violent confrontations, the worst being on the 8 March when students in MEES attacked those organising the AG. According to a report in *Sud Quotidien*, students brandished gas bombs, knives and hatchets, and despite light injuries the strike was renewed for a further 48 hours (10 March). The political motivation of the strike that had been thinly disguised under the cover of 'corporatist demands' was expressed openly in the final phase of the election. The result of this – as we have seen – was heightened violence. Violence and the threat of violence escalated from the 8 March when members of the UED received death threats (see *Sud Quotidien*, 2000d).

¹⁷² "Abdou Diouf avait dit ... qu'il fallait fermer le campus sinon on ne pourrait pas maîtriser les étudiants. Après j'ai fait une déclaration à la radio, vous pouvez même l'avoir sur *Walfadjri* disant que 'Si Abdou Diouf ferme le campus, je ferme le Palais' et ça c'est une déclaration politique."

While the official meetings of the AG were notable for the absence of overt political statements in the first weeks of the strike, the rest of the university was a hive of political debate. A slightly satirical report in *Sud Quotidien* on 12 February 2000 noted that the walls of the university could be considered as: "Agence Campus Presse." The paper even commented that through this 'agence de presse' members of different parties could "se livrent une bataille verbale à distance" (could fight verbally from a distance). Examples of this graffiti can still be seen on the walls of the university today. 'Sept ans de suicide collectif encore? Ah non!' (Not another seven years of collective suicide) or 'Où sont les 20 000 emplois par an promis par Diouf?' (Where are the 20,000 jobs per year promised by Diouf?) (2000h)

in February everyone, all the political forces in the country, at the university and in education were united around the idea of getting rid of Diouf. But before we did not dare say this, during the AG we spoke of the problems of grants and teaching issues (Interview, 12 February 2004).¹⁷³

Many student leaders describe the strike as the most widely supported at the university for years, comparing it to the movement in 1988 and 1993. Toure explains that there was an *engouement* (infatuation or craze) among students, with thousands of student participants at every AG. On one occasion in February a student who had been part of the delegation to the Ministry of Education was asked to make a report of the negotiations in front of the AG. Toure describes what happened:

... we asked a comrade to make the report on our meeting with the Minister of Education – who had responded positively to the questions posed – the comrade said to the AG: ‘Comrades I think that we have reached a turning point in the strike. Yesterday we met the minister who is in agreement on several problems. All the students cried ‘corrupted, corrupted, corrupted’, then when I took the platform I said that beyond our ‘official demands’ that we had advanced there was a ‘preamble’, which was the departure of Abdou Diouf. Everyone cried ‘*Sopi, Sopi, Sopi*’. And we said that students today are in agreement that there is only one point on our list of demands, the departure of Abdou Diouf and they cried that Diouf ‘Na dem, na dem, na dem’ [that he go] ... This is why there was such a popular frenzy around the strike (Interview, 12 February 2004).¹⁷⁴

After the first vote commentators and politicians celebrated the victory for ‘youth’. Bathily gave some idea of the historical significance of the vote in a interview held in the between of the two elections:

It is true that this election has assumed an historical character, exceptional from all points of view. We have never seen such enthusiasm for political change in Senegal ... Those who voted on 27 February 2000 represented an electorate essentially

¹⁷³ “au mois de février tout le monde, toutes les forces vives de la nation, toutes les forces vives de l’université et scolaires étaient autour de l’idée qui était le départ de Diouf. Mais avant, on n’osait pas dire ça en Assemblée Générale on parlait de problèmes de bourse ... de problèmes pédagogiques.”

¹⁷⁴ “...on a demandé à un frère de faire le rapport de notre rencontre avec le ministre de l’Education Nationale d’alors, qui avait fait des avancées positives par rapport aux questions qu’on posait ... il disait que ‘Camarades, je pense que on est au tournant de la grève. Hier on a rencontré le ministre de l’Education Nationale qui est d’accord sur plusieurs problèmes.’ Les étudiants, tous les étudiants ont crié ‘corrompus, corrompus, corrompus’ ensuite lorsque j’ai pris la parole, j’ai dit que au delà de la plate-forme revendicative que nous avons posée il y a un préalable, c’est le départ de Diouf et tout le monde a crié: ‘Sopi, sopi, sopi.’ Et on a dit que les étudiants aujourd’hui sont d’accord qu’il y a un seul point à la plate-forme revendicative: c’est le départ de Diouf et ils criaient que Diouf ‘Na dem, na dem, na dem’ (qu’il parte) ... Donc c’est pourquoi il y avait un engouement populaire autour de la grève.”

composed of the young, who had cut the links with traditional forms of political engagement, based on a dependence on some or other local or national leader. These young people have a more independent spirit coupled with a commitment to ensure transformation (Walfadjri, 2000f).¹⁷⁵

The PS also responded to the youth vote, who they claimed made the difference in the first round of the vote on 27 February. However, there is no avoiding the desperation in their attempts to engage the 'youth' and students. In their ten-point plan issued after the first round, four points were dedicated to youth and students. Point five promised to increase by 50 percent the number of those receiving grants and to recruit all graduates from the ENS and the *Ecole de Formation des Instituteurs* (EFI) (*Sud Quotidien*, 2000i). These promises did not convince university students; on the contrary they were seen for what they were: last minute bribes. One student questioned on the proposals probably spoke for most of the student body when he said: "these last minute promises do not interest us."¹⁷⁶ ENS students confirmed their support for *Coalition Alternance 2000* before the second round when they met Wade and defined the 'conditions' of their support (*Sud Quotidien*, 2000j).

Meanwhile negotiations with the Minister of Education – Andre Sonko – had reached a clear impasse. When students met him on the 4 March he doubted his ability to resolve their grievances: "At the moment I can not involve myself in finding a solution to your problems as I might not even figure in the next government" (*Sud Quotidien*, 2000k).¹⁷⁷ Given the uncertainty in the country, it is hard to disagree with him.

Wade won the second round securing 58.5 percent of the vote to Diouf's 41.5 percent. According to the result 43 percent of those registered to vote were aged between 18-35 or 1,127,100 of the 2,618,176 Senegalese registered to vote. As *Sud Quotidien* correctly observed, "This age group seems to have voted most heavily in the two rounds of the presidential elections in February and March 2000, to ensure the victory of the

¹⁷⁵ "C'est vrai que ce scrutin a revêtu un caractère historique, exceptionnel à tous points de vue. Jamais nous n'avons vu s'exprimer avec autant de vigueur la volonté de changement au Sénégal ... ceux qui ont voté le 27 février 2000 représentent un électorat pour l'essentiel composé de jeunes qui ont coupé les amarres avec les formes traditionnelles d'engagement politique, fondé sur la dépendance par rapport à tel ou tel autre leader local ou national. Les jeunes ont un esprit plus indépendant, doublé d'une volonté d'assurer le changement."

¹⁷⁶ "Ses promesses de dernière minute ne nous intéressent pas."

¹⁷⁷ "Je ne peux actuellement pas m'engager dans la recherche de solutions à vos problèmes dans la mesure où je ne suis pas sûr de figurer au prochain gouvernement."

alternance.”¹⁷⁸ However, those between 18-26 made up only 13.55 percent against 29.49 percent for those between 26-35 years old (Sud Quotidien, 2000). Yet these statistics conceal the mobilisation of the youth – and particularly students – in the campaign. Youth were not simply the backbone of Wade’s electoral victory but also among the principal organisers and propagandists of his campaign.

Madiop Biteye – the Secretary General of the *Mouvement des Elèves et Etudiants Libéraux* (MEEL)¹⁷⁹ – recalls how student activists began to radicalise ‘youth’ from August 1999:

we decided to go into schools in the region and to mobilise youth ... To organise and prepare the polling stations ... and to supervise the registration, to help the population obtain identity cards to register on the electoral rolls ... we ensured that the population received their voter cards” (Interview, 5 February 2004).¹⁸⁰

During the election, students were also present in the *bureaux de vote* (polling stations), and several student leaders identified the presence of student activists in the *bureaux de vote* as the reason why there was no serious electoral fraud. Students were also active after the votes, during the counting of ballot papers. They scrutinised the procedure and even – according to certain reports – accompanied the military to ensure that the ballot boxes were not tampered with (Madiop, Interview 5 February 2004).

However most students participated directly in the campaign by travelling in mini-buses commandeered by student groups, and frequently paid for by political parties.¹⁸¹ Ibrahima Ba argues that hundreds of vehicles were used by students in the run-up to the two elections. Students organised the ‘caravans’ for two principal reasons. The first was to vote themselves, as many were registered in their home localities, and secondly to

¹⁷⁸ “Cette tranche d’âge semble avoir le plus voté lors du scrutin présidentiel à deux tours, de février et mars 2000 en assurant l’alternance.”

¹⁷⁹ I was introduced to Mor Faye – the Secretary General of MEES – by his friend and neighbour Madiop Biteye. They both boasted of playing football together (*Lux*, 2003).

¹⁸⁰ “nous avons décidé de descendre dans les lycées, dans les campagnes, et de mobiliser les jeunes... pour se préparer à être dans les bureaux de vote ... et à superviser les inscriptions, à aider les populations à obtenir des cartes d’identité pour s’inscrire sur les listes électorales... nous avons accompagné donc la population à retirer leur carte d’électeur.”

¹⁸¹ Biteye (5 February 2004) explains that the second round of the election coincided with the ‘fête de Tabaski’. During the festival each year a huge proportion of the population of Dakar travel to their rural areas to ‘celebrate’ (it is the only time of the year when it is possible to travel easily around the city). In 2000 Biteye argues that those who had left the city returned the following day to vote in the second round.

sensibiliser (raise awareness) their towns and villages in 'directing the vote'. Ba gives a good sense of the fervour during one of these *caravanes*:

I voted in conditions where I could have lost my life ... on the eve of the elections I travelled in a vehicle that didn't have any headlights, and we took these risks because all those who were in the vehicle wanted to vote. It was between the two rounds of the election ... We said to ourselves that it is essential that we arrive, because tomorrow an historical event will take place ... and we travelled with only one headlight for a distance of 45 km between Tambacouda and Koussanar. I live in Koussanar and therefore I accepted to travel in these conditions to realise my dream: to change the regime in Senegal (Interview, 12 February 2004).¹⁸²

Coudy Kane was living in Dakar with her family throughout the election. She describes how she organised voter registration in Peking, a large neighbourhood in the north of the city:

In my neighbourhood I raised people's awareness ... They were invited to register, as we had done, then they were encouraged to vote ... They were registered on the voter's roll ... and on the day of the vote we pushed them to get there (Interview, 14 February 2004).¹⁸³

Other students explained that they influenced their families and villages to vote by explaining the conditions at the university. Meissa Toure one of the principal student leaders at the time explains the responsibility to mobilise their 'parents', "it was necessary to engage in the campaign and we did it by raising our parents' awareness to the conditions in which we lived." Toure explains that it was necessary to convince their parents with these arguments, because of the influence held by Diouf and the PS in rural areas:

they did not believe in President Diouf. [Students were forced to] say to our parents that today "I am at university and I don't have either a grant or room, I live in incredibly difficult conditions ... I don't eat or I only eat one full meal a day. And you don't have the means to help me. Therefore to change these things it is

¹⁸² "J'ai voté dans des conditions où je pouvais perdre la vie ... à la veille des élections, j'ai voyagé dans un véhicule qui n'avait pas de phares, et le soir on a pris ces risques parce que tout ceux qui étaient dans le véhicule voulaient aller voter. C'était entre les deux tours ... On s'est dit que l'essentiel soit qu'on arrive; parce que demain, il se passera quelque chose d'historique... et on a voyagé avec un seul phare sur une distance de 45 km entre Tambacouda et Koussanar. Moi, j'habite Koussanar. Et donc j'ai accepté de voyager dans ces conditions-là pour tout juste réaliser mon rêve: changer le régime au Sénégal."

¹⁸³ "au niveau du quartier je me suis mise à sensibiliser ... les gens du quartier d'abord. On les a invités à s'inscrire, comme nous l'avions fait. On les a aussi invités à aller voter. Il y avait les parents et tous les voisins ... ils sont allés s'inscrire sur les listes électorales ... et le jour du vote, on les a poussés à y aller"

necessary to get rid of Abdou Diouf ... and if you continue to vote for the president ... after we have finished our Masters we will not be working” ... and our parents understood. They voted for President Wade and we were responsible for the result (Interview 12 February 2004).¹⁸⁴

All political groupings on the campus organised transport – ‘caravans’ – for students to travel across the country. The *Mouvement des Elèves et Etudiants Socialistes* (MEES) arranged a dozen mini-buses to take their militants around the country on the 15 March. However, Idressa Gassama argued that students used the buses organised by PS students to campaign for *sopi*. During the second tour the opposition organised buses under the structure *Wade pour l’Alternance avec la Coalition 2000* (WAC) (*Sud Quotidien*, 2000m).

The support of students came at a price. Firstly, they regarded the victory as a ‘pact’ with Wade, where their support would secure his commitment to improve conditions at the university. Secondly, if he failed to deliver on the ‘pact’ he would face the same intransigent opposition from a movement he had rallied to his cause.¹⁸⁵ Students also felt a keen sense of ‘ownership’ of the elections, an historical justification for their demands and an understanding that they were involved with the opposition, in the words of Gassama, “to stir things up.” This did not give them a sense of gratitude for the ‘change’, but an authority over it. As Nar Ndoeye argued in 2001: “The points we were struggling for have been there for a long time, even under the socialist government. So the question I ask: Why not when Abdoulaye Wade comes to power? Why not ask the same question?” (Interview, 11 March 2001).

¹⁸⁴ “pour le faire il fallait descendre au niveau des campagnes, au niveau des villes, au niveau des villages, nous l’avons fait en sensibilisant nos parents aux conditions, dans lesquelles nous vivions.” ... ils ne croyaient pas au Président Diouf [...] dire à nos parents que, aujourd’hui, je suis à l’université, je n’ai ni bourse ni chambre, je vis dans des conditions excessivement difficiles... je ne mange pas ou je mange une seule fois par jour. Et vous n’avez pas les moyens de m’aider. Donc pour faire changer les choses, il faut changer le PS, il faut faire partir le président Abdou Diouf. ... et si vous continuez à voter pour le président ... nous même, après la maîtrise, n’aurons pas de boulots. ... et nos parents ont compris. Ils ont voté pour le président Wade. Et nous avons remporté les élections.”

¹⁸⁵ During the university strike in 2001 the president was already distancing himself from any ‘agreement’ he had purportedly made with the students: “Which electoral promises?” he asked in a press conference in January “Have they told you that? Well they’ve said nothing to me about it. Today is the first time I’ve heard about not honouring electoral promises ... No student has said that to me. Never” (*Pan-African News Agency*, 2001).

Euphoria swept the campus after Wade's victory in the second round on the 19 March.¹⁸⁶ One student who had been active in Kaolack describes the ambiance: "It was euphoric, people were happy. They believed in the change. They believed that their lives would improve and that young people would have work. There was hope, euphoria ... we danced" (Mbaye Sene, Interview, 11 February 2004).¹⁸⁷ The concert that had been promised to students by Wade in the event of his victory was held on the 22 March in Dakar. Pape Birahim Ndiaye, a student-deputy for the PDS, spoke from the podium: "if today we see that *sopi* has achieved power, it is especially thanks to the youth." At the same time he warned students that Wade would not bring them paradise on a *plateau d'argent* (silver plate) but – retreating to familiar territory – it was necessary to "tighten the belt and work to ensure that Senegal finds a way out of its misery."¹⁸⁸ Thousands wore t-shirts with Wade's effigy and, when he arrived, the chant went up in the stadium, "Papa ñëwna, Papa dikkan" ('Father has come, father has arrived'). Wade repeated the message of his campaign, explaining that "it is the youth of Senegal who liberated me from prison and today it is the same youth who have elected me" (*Sud Quotidien*, 2000n).¹⁸⁹

Walfadjri commented after the final victory that perhaps observers had been right to see the hand of political manipulation behind student action, noting that almost all university students and school students in Senegal were engaged in the campaign. However, pure 'independence' in the student movement is a myth frequently used to debunk their activism (*Walfadjri*, 2000g). Their action is always a complicated interaction between political parties and the dynamic of campus activism. This symbiosis of forces was exemplified in student participation in Wade's election campaign.

¹⁸⁶ For a full break down of the results see *Walfadjri* 21 March (2000e).

¹⁸⁷ "C'était l'euphorie, donc les gens étaient contents. Ils croyaient au changement. Ils croyaient qu'on allait vivre dans de meilleures conditions, que les jeunes allaient avoir du travail. C'était l'espoir, c'était l'euphorie ... On dansait."

¹⁸⁸ The theme of 'work' has been an important one to the Wade phenomena. Wade's credo – painted on walls in Dakar, repeated daily by politicians and even put to music: "Il faut travailler, beaucoup travailler, encore travailler, toujours travailler."

"si aujourd'hui le *sopi* a accédé au pouvoir c'est surtout grâce à la jeunesse."

"se serrer la ceinture et travailler pour sortir le Sénégal de la misère."

¹⁸⁹ "c'est la jeunesse sénégalaise qui m'a libéré de prison, et aujourd'hui c'est cette même jeunesse qui m'a élu."

Although the strike at the university continued almost until the end of the month – returning to class on the 27 March – UED quickly signed an agreement with the new government. They claimed to be aware that although Wade would not be able to resolve all of their issues with a *baguette magique* (magic wand) students at least would have, according to Diattara, *une oreille plus attentive* (a more attentive ear) (Walfadjri, 2000g). Wade inherited the culmination of more than a decade of demands, notably the reduction in the price of meal tickets and rent for student accommodation on campus and the increase and extension of student grants (*Sud Quotidien*, 2000o). His political honeymoon lasted less than a year.

6:4:4 The death of Balla Gaye and the student strike 2001

Perhaps the first fact to note in the university strike that shook the campus (and country) between January and February 2001 was how quickly the university returned to being an arena of confrontation with the government. The strike – and the death of the student Balla Gaye – signalled the first major crisis for the Wade government, and a rupture with students who had been almost unambiguous supporters and campaigners of the *Coalition Alternance* the previous year. The strike can be seen as the first *nauffrage* (shipwreck) suffered by the regime.¹⁹⁰ The aftermath of the strike also triggered other developments that determined the fate of the student movement.

The immediate background to the strike was illustrative of the tensions and problems in higher education in Senegal throughout the 1990s. The government's national plan for education, *Programme Décennal d'Education et de Formation* (PDEF), which was being partly funded by the World Bank, is the source of well-known resentment. In a national conference held immediately before the start of the strike the Minister for Higher Education threatened to find other sources of funding if the conditions attached to the World Bank loan did not coincide with domestic priorities for higher education in Senegal. The conference included student representatives and members of the *Syndicat Autonome des Enseignants du Supérieur* (SAES) who made their opposition to the proposals clear, with students issuing a threat of their own if the government went ahead

¹⁹⁰ The title of Almamy Mamadou Wane's (2003) recent study *Le Sénégal entre deux naufrages? Le Joola et l'alternance* ('Senegal between two ship wrecks? The Joola [passanger ferry that sunk in 2002] and democratic transition').

with certain reforms. They strongly opposed the planned increase in university inscription to CFA35,000. The daily newspaper *Sud Quotidien* reported that student representatives saw in the proposal a possible source of disruption at the university. The student delegation insisted that the minister must make it clear that the new World Bank reforms were contrary to the *gouvernement de l'alternance*. Déthié Diouf, a student representative, said they could convoke “an *Assemblée Générale* of students to launch a indefinite strike in response to the measures announced” (*Sud Quotidien*, 2001a).¹⁹¹

The strike started on the 15 January and was limited to several departments; two days later it had spread through most of the university. According to Alioune Diop, a student delegate:

We participated a great deal in the *alternance* ... and we thought that the era of strikes was over. We see that the current leaders who are still deaf to our grievances are those who used us and promised us better conditions of study and life on the campus during the election campaign (Interview, 4 March 2001).¹⁹²

Student representatives stated at the General Assembly on the 17 January that until they heard from the authorities they would refuse to pay for food at the university's restaurants (*Sud Quotidien*, 2001b).

The strike was eloquent testimony to the fact that many regarded the ‘pact’ to have been broken. The central demands revolved around what came to be called the *Cercle magique*: the reduction in the cost of rent and meal tickets; financial help to students without the state grant; the allocation of the grant to students in the second and third years and the removal of the system of half-grants in the second year. Although these points formed the core of *la plate-forme revendicative* (demands), other issues were raised during the course of the strike and varied between departments. Some included access to the internet on the campus and improved student facilities. Idessa Gassama expressed the way the strike generalised discontent: “There are no phones here. So if

¹⁹¹ “une assemblée générale des étudiants pour lancer un mot d’ordre de grève illimitée en guise de riposte à la mesure annoncée.”

¹⁹² “nous avons beaucoup participé à l’alternance ... et nous pensions que ç’en était fini pour les grèves. Nous constatons que les dirigeants actuels qui restent sourds à nos doléances sont ceux qui nous courtoisaient en nous promettant de meilleures conditions d’études et de vie dans le campus pendant les campagnes électorales.”

our mothers need to call us it isn't possible. Look at where we watch TV we are crowded into one room. And we didn't even ask for these things!" (Interview, 4 March 2001).

In the first weeks of the strike there was an AG every forty-eight hours. Student representatives from UED addressed students in front of the *Centre des Oeuvres Universitaires de Dakar* (COUD). Although most of the university was brought to a standstill, there were a number of incidents at the *Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines* which houses the semi-independent *Institut Français pour les Etrangers* (IFE), where foreign students are taught French. There was no effort to explain the issues on the strike and as a consequence there was, for a time, tension and misunderstandings. A student activist recalls that for the first week of the strike no clear set of demands were formulated: "I participated in all the meetings and for a lot of the time certain students were saying that it was necessary ... that we showed President Wade ... that not everyone was with him. That it was necessary that we came out before the referendum¹⁹³ ... we came out on strike without a list of demands and it was during the strike that we tried to present the demands to the students" (Madiop Biteye, interview, 5 February 2004).¹⁹⁴ Biteye argues that certain students used the strike '*pour être connus* (to get known)'. Serious divisions within MEEL had also begun to emerge.¹⁹⁵

There were demonstrations of several thousand students during the month. The demonstrations were often sparked by the AG, with students marching into town while singing their battle song: "*Nous disons non, nous disons non, camarades élèves, camarades étudiants, il est temps que nous disions non*" (We say no, we say no, comrade pupils, comrade students, it is time to say no). Although a number of vehicles and shops were damaged in the events leading up to 31 January, every protest was peaceful.

¹⁹³ The referendum on the new constitution was held on the 7 January, so Biteye is mistaken in this respect..

¹⁹⁴ "Moi, j'ai participé à toutes les réunions. Et la plupart du temps, certains étudiants se disaient qu'il fallait ... qu'on sorte pour montrer au Président Wade que tout le monde n'est pas avec lui. Il fallait qu'on sorte avant le referendum ... nous sommes partis en grève sans plate-forme revendicative et, au cours de la grève, on a essayé de confectionner ... présenter des revendication aux étudiants."

¹⁹⁵ A virtual civil war inside the MEEL had to be mediated by Idrissa Seck, the deputy general secretary of the party at the time. See, for an example of this infighting, *Le Populaire* (2001a).

On 31 January, at the end of an AG that had renewed the strike for a further 48 hours, a decision was made to demonstrate: “We decided to demonstrate to ensure the authorities heard our voices ... we said to ourselves that this march must be peaceful” (Amadou Dieye Wade, 3 March 2001). In a crowd of about 4,000 students, almost half continued on to the demonstration. Later a group of students decided to close one of the main streets. Students throwing stones forced the police out of the area. At about 10 am students took ‘control’ of Avenue Cheikh Anta Diop, a major road linking the university to the centre of Dakar, and most of the adjacent streets. When it became clear that the police had retreated, the mood changed to one of jubilation, the cry went up: ‘*Nous disons non ...*’ Before long riot police returned in greater number. Students took up position again, but suddenly shots could be heard and demonstrators ran for cover, doubting whether they were real bullets. The doubt did not last for long; dozens of students were wounded and Balla Gaye, a twenty-four year old law student, was killed inside the university campus.¹⁹⁶

Within hours the university became the dominant issue in the country. The national media expressed disbelief that *papa Sopi’s* government could have been responsible: “The first year of the new government registers the first student killed by security forces within the university compound” (*Le Matin*, 2001a).¹⁹⁷ Parallels were immediately drawn with 1968; old militants of that era were interviewed on national television and in every newspaper.¹⁹⁸ The opposition PS did not lose the opportunity to attack the government. The general secretary of the party, Ousmane Tanor Dieng, was clear who was to blame: “These facts are illustrative of an authoritarian and dictatorial power currently running the country” (*Le Matin*, 2001a).¹⁹⁹

The president agreed to meet a delegation of students. But the most significant concession made to the students was the demotion of Madior Diop, the Minister of Higher Education, whose resignation had been the first demand of students in the

¹⁹⁶ For a description of the demonstration see *Le Matin* (2001a) and *Sud Quotidien* (2001c).

¹⁹⁷ “Pour la première année d’alternance, ils enregistrent le premier étudiant tué par les forces de l’ordre dans l’enceinte de l’université.”

¹⁹⁸ See particularly *Sud Quotidien* (2001c), *Le Matin* (2001a) and even the normally frivolous *Le Populaire* (2001b) from 1 February.

¹⁹⁹ “Les faits ne font que traduire les pratiques du pouvoir autoritaire et dictatorial que nous avons en place.”

aftermath of the demonstration. Libasse Diop, a member of coalition party *Alliance des Forces du Progrès* (AFP), replaced him (Le Matin, 2001b). The decision was announced to students at the AG on 5 February. Amadou Ndiaye – the press officer for UED – claimed: “This decision taken by the head of state will not change our struggle because we are only concerned with the total satisfaction of our demands” (Le Matin, 2001).²⁰⁰ Still, students cheered the announcement.

Even before these events the media reported a ‘radicalisation’ of the student movement. This was, to a certain extent, very real. For the first time student participation in the AGs included the majority of the campus-based student body. The national media now followed every movement on the campus and support came from school students and the general public. One student captured the mood, a mixture of anger and confidence, commenting on the appointment of a new Minister “another huge salary while poor students do not have enough to eat, drink and continue to suffer ... this decision of the president compels us to go to all lengths to win our demands” (*Le Matin*, 2001).²⁰¹

Student representatives sensed the change in mood across the country and added several demands: students must be represented on the commission of inquiry; the family of Balla Gaye have to be compensated; and the police should not be allowed on the campus. The *révolte universitaire* had triggered the first major crisis for the new regime, and accusations, denials, counter-accusations filled the air in the days after 31 January.

Wade even questioned the shooting: “The police are not armed. I have to remind people, who assume the police have weapons, that our police are not armed.” He argued it was impossible for the police to have been responsible given their location far from the university at the time, and moreover he exclaimed: “This sort of thing has happened in the past in Senegal, but we are in a new era now” (Pan-African News Agency, 2001).

The Minister of the Interior, General Mamadou Niang, went further, maintaining that the police had never ‘violated’ the interior of the university, an area that was considered

²⁰⁰ “Cette décision du chef de l’Etat ne va pas changer notre forme de lutte car ce qui nous préoccupe, c’est la satisfaction totale de notre plate-forme revendicative.”

²⁰¹ “une autre masse salariale alors que de pauvres étudiants n’ont même de quoi manger, ni boire et continuent de souffrir ... cette décision du président nous pousse à aller jusqu’au bout de nos forces pour obtenir gain de cause.”

sacrosanct. Niang fuelled speculation that some other ‘fifth column’ had been responsible for the murder: “the boy has been killed; by what and where?”²⁰² Many now asked if it had been a student *assassin* paid for by the opposition to cause mayhem for the government before important legislative elections in April. Although these claims were dismissed by the majority of students on the campus the commission of inquiry claimed that their investigation was hampered by the failure of the government to give them adequate access to relevant information. As we will see the silence of the inquiry continued to fuel speculation of an *étudiant assassin*. This in turn has given rise to bitterness at the university.²⁰³

At the time political groups on the campus were united around a desire to see the demands met and the strike resolved, even if it required further militant action. Even the MEEL stated: “We ask the authorities ... that light is shone on the circumstances of this event” (*Le Matin*, 2001c).²⁰⁴ Students from the coalition party AFP held a meeting and made a similar demand.

More significant was the level of support from students across the country. For the first time students from Gaston Berger in Saint-Louis, the second university in the country, made their support clear: “The authorities are not taking things seriously, just as the case is in the process of escalating” (*Le Matin*, 2001b).²⁰⁵ They decided to boycott lectures until the following week and organised sit-ins and demonstrations. Other students at the university requisitioned vehicles to take them the 10 km into town, so they could spread the strike amongst pupils in local schools, while others marched into town shouting “*policiers assassins*.” They added their voices to the demands made by students in Dakar, by calling for the dismissal of the Minister of Higher Education (*Sud Quotidien*, 2001d). School students in the *lycée* Malick Sy in Thiès, the second city in Senegal, joined the university in three days of mourning, sending delegates to other schools in the region to ensure that they too closed as a mark of solidarity with the university. Even primary schools were empty of pupils. By 11am on the first of

²⁰² “Le garçon a été tué; par quoi et où?” quoted in *Le Matin* (2001a).

²⁰³ A sense of this bitterness could be seen a year after Balla Gaye’s death in internet discussion groups See: <http://www.wanadoo.sn/fr/service/communiquer/forum/read.php?f=7&i=17&t=17>.

²⁰⁴ “Nous demandons aux autorités ... que la lumière soit faite sur les circonstances de cet évènement.”

²⁰⁵ “les autorités jouent de la langue de bois, ils ne prennent pas les choses au sérieux alors que la case est en train de brûler.”

February, “every pupil was in the street and in the main roads of the town returning calmly home” (*Sud Quotidien*, 2001d).²⁰⁶

Student representatives from UED met Wade at the presidential palace on the 6 February after four days of national mourning. They maintained a hard-line on the *cercle magique* of ‘unnegotiable’ demands, and while the negotiations were taking place the strike was extended from forty-eight hours to seventy-two. The next General Assembly was held on Thursday morning. “I have a question to ask you: are you satisfied?” shouted Matar Seck, nick-named ‘Kabila’, after the contents of the meeting had been explained. The president was reported to have agreed to their *plate-forme* of demands “we have obtained everything we have asked for” (*Sud Quotidien*, 2001e).²⁰⁷ The agreement included the creation of a commission of inquiry; the recognition that 31 January would be acknowledged as the ‘day of the martyrs’; the family of Balla Gaye would be compensated and the satisfaction of all the points in *le cercle magique*.

Prior to 31 January participation in the strike had been limited. A minority of the students attended AG meetings. The strike was dominated by leading members of UED and younger students. The decisions to extend the strikes were never voted on and no contributions were invited from the ‘floor’. It was a male dominated event with limited active support and often divided along party lines. As Jean-Claude Kongo has observed:

Before the death of Balla Gaye, the campus was practically divided in two. One felt that there were two sides, one being the supporters of the president and the opposition who would do everything to combat this. There were those, of course, who wanted the strike to be ‘pure’ – under serious demands. But it is the two main parties who are in control (Interview, 3 March 2001).

On the 31 January everything changed. As Amadou Dieye Wade noted “What changed events was the death of Balla” (Interview, 3 March). Gassama agreed: “When I heard that Balla Gaye was wounded and then that he had died we started to riot ... No one slept ... if students themselves found you in your room, they would tell you to get out

²⁰⁶ “tous les élèves étaient dans les rues et dans les différentes artères du centre-ville pour rentrer calmement chez eux.”

²⁰⁷ “J’ai une question à vous poser: Etes- vous satisfaits?” “tout ce que nous avons demandé, nous l’avons obtenu.”

and go to the front. Everyone participated, throwing stones, marching” (Interview, 4 March 2001).

The death of Balla Gaye was a catalyst to students who had not been active: “everyone, even those who were not excited by the desire to go on strike, now became active” (Amadou Dieye Wade, Interview, 3 March 2001). Others who had not noticed or been interested in the university strike, over the next few days, supported and participated in demonstrations and rallies. Oumy Ndour – a student representative at the *Centre d’Etudes des Science et Techniques de l’Information* (CESTI) – commented “the students became interested in the movement after the death of Balla Gaye.” Before this she noted “most of the work was conducted by a group of students ... although it was a different matter when it came to the demonstrations” (Interview, 9 March 2001).

A vigil was held outside Hôpital Principal, a military hospital in the centre of Dakar, where the body was taken. Thousands of students were joined by pupils from local schools and colleges in a march to the hospital through the centre of the city. Market sellers and bystanders watched and many cried. When the crowd passed the Ministry of the Interior, sadness turned to anger; “*Assassins, Assassins*” the crowd shouted at the police officers guarding the building. When they reached the presidential palace the same cries were heard “under the embarrassed gaze of the police” (*Sud Quotidien*, 2000d).²⁰⁸ There were no obstructions to their progress past the palace, and they shouted *Woye Wete, Cheikh Anta moungui dioye, Balla Gaye deme na* (Balla Gaye we miss you, the UCAD cries).

At the hospital thousands of students and pupils were already gathered. A poem distributed to students and dedicated to Balla Gaye by the politician and former student leader Talla Sylla lay torn on the floor, as students declared, “*Nous refusons la manipulation politique*” (*Sud Quotidien*, 2001d). When the Minister of the Interior, Mamadou Niang arrived, sent by the president to express his condolences to the students and Balla Gaye’s family, the anger of the crowd exploded. After he had spoken to the family he tried to leave, but students blocked his cortège. One shouted: “How can you leave without meeting the student leaders?” Student leaders lost control and

²⁰⁸ “sous le regard ‘gêné’ d’une dizaine de policier.”

pleaded with the others to let the Minister pass. In the middle of this scene Niang declared: “I want to say to you that we share this pain. You are our children. The enquiry into who hurt Balla Gaye leading to his death will be carried through to the end.” Students were furious that he had referred to Balla Gaye only being hurt and they forced him to repeat “*Balla est mort*.” As he entered the car, anger rose and his path was obstructed by students who hit and kicked the side of the car. As one newspaper reported “the government representatives just escaped being lynched” (*Sud Quotidien*, 2001d).²⁰⁹

Balla Gaye’s body was carried to the university and followed by a procession that stretched through the city. The palace gates had been reinforced by the time students moved past them, they shouted again at the police and one woman watching the cortège expressed what many were thinking: “They are capable of forcing the doors of the presidential palace” (*Sud Quotidien*, 2001d).²¹⁰ Outside the university the cortège carrying the body stopped for Balla Gaye’s father to address the crowds. According to the BBC correspondent Natalia Antelava: “all the streets were blocked, there were perhaps more than one hundred thousand people” (Interview, 3 February 2001).²¹¹ The father – El Hadj Babacar Gaye – addressed the crowd, calling his son’s death the *sentence divine* and asking students to remain calm.²¹² When he finished, people dispersed quietly, with many students making their way to the waiting vehicles to take them to Touba, the religious capital of Senegal, where Balla Gaye was finally buried.

The immediate aftermath of the strike seemed to suggest that nothing had changed, but the reality was quite different. The government reaction to the crisis – accepting the entire *cercle magique* – led to a series of profound university reforms and the eventual disintegration of the UED. Yankhoba Seydi, who boasted to having been instrumental in forming the union in 1999, now claimed that he delivered the *coup de grace* in 2003:

²⁰⁹ “Comment pouvez-vous partir sans rencontrer les dirigeants étudiants?”

“Je veux vous dire que nous partageons cette peine. Vous êtes nos enfants. L’enquête pour savoir qui a blessé Balla Gaye jusqu’à ce que mort d’homme s’en suive sera menée jusqu’à son terme.”

“Les représentants du gouvernement ont échappé de peu au lynchage.”

²¹⁰ “Ils sont capables d’enfoncer les portes du palais de la République.”

²¹¹ Students interviewed in 2004 about the number of people present say that there were far fewer than the 100,000 claimed by Antelava.

²¹² According to Abdoulaye Deme (2002: 23) his exact words were “It is God who had given him to me, and it is he who has taken him back from me. I ask you to calm down and believe in God” (“C’est Dieu qui me l’avait donné et il me l’a repris. Je vous demande de vous calmer et croire en Dieu”).

“I was head of the *Amicale* at the *Faculté des Lettres*.²¹³ I didn’t send representatives to the UED because I found the movement not only corrupt but also ineffective. If you don’t have the five faculties present it can not exist and those who were there ... we knew they were corrupted” (Interview 18 March 2004). Meissa Toure argues that the reasons for the strike lie in failure of those who had led the movement during the election:

I say it often to Minister Sow ... we are largely responsible because after having ... elected their chief Wade we all left the movement and ‘nature abhors a vacuum’... [and] other students who are only involved for their own interests filled the vacuum ... because we said at the time – euphoric with the victory – that instead of ... arranging for our members to fill the vacuum ... we said it is finished (Interview 12 February).²¹⁴

6:4:5 Corruption, reform and the Balla Gaye affair

When students are interviewed today about the effect of the *changement* on conditions at the university they typically respond by referring to the reforms introduced after Balla Gaye’s death. Hamidou Ba speaks for many students when he explains:

Wade did two positive things for students: he generalised assistance ... that is every student who does not receive a grant benefits from a sum of CFA60,000 from the state. That is a very good thing. Secondly he allocated grants to the second year of the ‘second cycle’. When you come directly from school you don’t automatically have a grant, but you do receive ‘assistance’. If you get through to the second year ... you get a full grant. This was not the case with the former government” (Interview, 28 January 2004).²¹⁵

²¹³ *Faculté des Lettres* has the status – after many years of student mobilisation – of being both the most militant and most powerful faculty. This is partly because it has the highest number of students, 13,000 in 2004.

²¹⁴ “Je le dis souvent au Ministre Sow ... nous avons une grande responsabilité parce que, après avoir ... élu maître Wade, nous avons tous laissé le mouvement syndical et ‘la nature a horreur du vide’ ... [et] d’autres étudiants qui ne sont animés que leur intérêt personnel occupent le vide... Parce que nous avons dit à l’époque - avec l’euphorie de la victoire - au lieu de ... mettre nos éléments au niveau ... comme on le faisait... on a dit que c’est fini.”

²¹⁵ “Wade a fait deux choses positives pour les étudiants: il a généralisé l’aide ... c’est-à-dire tous les étudiants non-boursiers bénéficient d’une somme de 60 000 octroyée par l’Etat. Ca, c’est une très bonne chose. Deuxièmement c’est la généralisation de la bourse au niveau de la 2^{ème} année du second cycle. Quand tu viens directement du lycée, tu n’as pas forcément une bourse, mais tu as automatiquement une aide si tu passes en 2^{ème} année là ... tu as une bourse entière. Ce n’était pas le cas avec l’ancien régime” There was quite a lot of reflection in Senegal on the fourth years since the ‘*alternance*’, in March 2004, many newspapers producing ‘anniversary’ specials replete with interviews with ‘*new citizens*’. Students interviewed, however, normally qualified their praise for Wade. Binette Ba, for example, praises the government: “Students have benefited a lot from the actions of the president: grants, assistances, reduction in the cost of rooms, restaurant tickets ... But there is a negative side” (“Les étudiants ont

Wade said that he regarded the university reforms among his principal achievements (*Le Soleil*, 2004). He lists the two main successes: firstly all students now receive either a grant or assistance on entering university and secondly, the entry exam to university has been suppressed meaning that students can go into directly onto higher education after the baccalaureate.²¹⁶ The government recorded a 41 percent increase in student numbers at UCAD and the *Université Gaston Berger* (UGB) between 1992 and 2002, that is an increase in student numbers from 22,052 to 31,172. UGB continues to stubbornly resist government pressure for a substantial increase in student enrolment, with student numbers still less than two thousand. However, to see the real effect of Wade's reforms, the comparison has to be made between the intake of students between 2000 and 2003. Here the statistics show an increase of approximately 2,500 students from 28,585 in 2000/2001 to 31,172 in 2002/2003.²¹⁷ The government has also been advocating the establishment of the *Collèges Universitaires Régionaux* (CUR), which will "decongest universities in Senegal and promote professional training" (*Sud Quotidien*, 2002).²¹⁸ But in the context of the university in Dakar it is inevitably an attempt to reduce the overcrowding.

The effects of these reforms, Wade argued, was to create a rupture with the World Bank and IMF. He explains that it was necessary to "fight to make the institutions of the World Bank accept this improvement to the conditions of the student body that we had for a long time wanted to bring about." The World Bank had long considered state expenditure on grants as an unnecessary and costly waste of the state's resources. Wade explains well the thinking of the World Bank: "the grant was considered to be in the 'social domain, in other words as 'consumption'. When they looked at the statistics they deduced from them that most of the money allocated to the university goes to this 'social element' and very little to teaching and training." Wade disagreed with these arguments insisting that the grant was not a 'luxury' but an investment: "It is extremely

beaucoup bénéficié des actions du président: bourses, aides, réduction du prix des chambres, des tickets de repas ... Mais il y a du négatif") *Scoop* (2004).

²¹⁶ The full extent of the reforms are revealing: they included the reduction of dinner tickets from CFA165 to CFA150, breakfast from CFA100 to CFA75, rooms that cost CFA5,000 each term were reduced to CFA4,000, while those at CFA4,000 were now reduced to CFA3,000. There is now a system of grants for all students who have not retaken the year and financial assistance for those without grants.

²¹⁷ See the official government website: <http://www.finances.gouv.sn/sitecso3.html>.

²¹⁸ 'décongestionner les universités sénégalaises et à promouvoir l'enseignement dans les filières courtes et professionnalisantes.'

important I accepted this, and it is why today I do not have any problems in giving out grants to every student who registers at the university. It is one of our greatest victories” (*Le Soleil*, 2004).²¹⁹

The result of the strike – and the death of Balla Gaye – forced the government’s hand on university reforms. One of the ‘*plus grandes victoires*’ of ‘*alternance*’ was forced on the government in an attempt to pacify the university. Deme Abdoulaye relates how the president “*a signé les accords à la va-vite*” (signed the agreement with a quick hand) after the death of Balla Gaye (Interview, 18 March 2004). Even Madiop Biteye of MEEL concedes that these reforms emanated from the strike and subsequent death of Balla Gaye: “it is true that it coincided with the death of Balla Gaye” (Interview, 5 February 2004).²²⁰ The decision to grant these demands compelled the government to ‘borrow’ from the following financial year.

Subsequent developments connected to the strike led to the dissolution of the UED. The student leadership – which had organised the strike – by the end of the academic year had almost all received scholarships to travel abroad. Abdoulaye claims that the decision to send the leadership abroad “killed the student movement that had taken years to construct” (Interview, 18 March). Yankhoba Seydi – a militant from the PDS – makes the same observation and with some fury he listed the names of the UED members who led the strike in 2001 and who subsequently left the country on government-awarded scholarships.²²¹ Madiop Biteye of the MEEL describes the same shame at the layer of student leaders who “benefited by going abroad on the backs of students” (Interview, 5 February 2004).²²²

In an unpublished text titled *l’Autre université*, Deme (2002) describes the immediate aftermath of the strike: “I looked with contempt at these corrupt delegates before the

²¹⁹ “se battre pour faire accepter, par les institutions de Bretton Woods, cette amélioration que nous tenions depuis longtemps à apporter à la conditions estudiantine.”

“les bourses étaient considérée comme étant du domaine du social, autrement dit, de la consommation. Lorsqu’ils regardaient les statistiques, ils en déduisaient que l’essentiel des fonds alloués à l’université servaient au social et très peu à l’enseignement et à la pédagogie.”

“C’est extrêmement important. J’ai fait accepter cela et c’est pourquoi, aujourd’hui, je n’ai plus d’ennuis en donnant des bourses à tout étudiant qui s’inscrit à l’université. C’est une de nos plus grandes victoires”

²²⁰ “C’est vrai que ça a coïncidé avec la mort de Balla Gaye.”

²²¹ He lists the old UED leadership now studying in France: Alionne Diop, Abdou Niang, Khady Ndiaye and Babacar Sarr (Interview, 18 March 2004).

²²² “profitent pour aller à l’extérieur sur le dos des étudiants.”

death of the comrade ... we had learnt that the president received the students to discuss their demands. After receiving the students' delegation certain demands had been agreed to." Certain students congratulated the delegation, he continues, as heroes for securing their demands while forgetting that their success had come about as the result of the death of their comrade. After the strike was lifted, students resumed their courses. At the same time, Abdoulaye argues: "The corrupt students negotiated their trips abroad."²²³ He notes that "at the start of the following academic year fifteen delegates had already left" despite the fact that the commission of enquiry had forbidden delegates to leave the country until it had concluded its work.²²⁴ Yankhoba Seydi claimed he made a public statement during the second anniversary of Balla Gaye's death that "the delegates who had left the country must return to assist in the enquiry" (Interview, 18 March). Today this is a popular demand of the student movement.

However, both Deme and Seydi fail to apportion blame in the most obvious place: with the government. The government followed a clear strategy that combined satisfying the reforms demanded by students while systematically buying off the student leadership with overseas scholarships. Deme fails to condemn it mainly because his text is targeted at student corruption which, according to his account, is of endemic proportions.²²⁵ He does, however, write: "Can the authorities give the reasons why they pushed for them to leave?" (2002: 25).²²⁶

The 'Balla Gaye affair' – as it is now referred to – rumbles on. It is both the cause of frequent student demonstrations, normally students from Gaye's old department (*Faculté des Sciences Juridiques et Politique*) and a continual humiliation for the government.²²⁷ The death of Balla Gaye – still unresolved – is the subject of frequent

²²³ Abdoulaye maintains that during the collection of money for the family of Balla Gaye some members of the student leadership helped themselves, "quel péché" (what a sin!) he exclaims.

²²⁴ "Je regardais avec mépris ces délégués corrompus avant la mort du camarade... nous avons appris que le président allait recevoir les étudiants pour discuter de la plate-forme revendicative. Après avoir reçu la délégation estudiantine, certaines revendications ont été satisfaites."

"Les corrompus négociaient leur voyage pour l'étranger."

"l'année suivante – à la rentrée – une quinzaine de délégués étaient déjà partis."

²²⁵ Deme claims that corruption among the student leadership is ubiquitous: "How can you understand and accept that a student asks a Minister, after a negotiation session, for lunch money" ("comment pouvez vous comprendre et accepter qu'un étudiant demande à monsieur le ministre de l'argent après une séance de négociation pour aller déjeuner?") (2002: 26).

²²⁶ "Les autorités peuvent-elles expliquer les raisons qui les ont poussés à les laisser sortir?"

²²⁷ However *Walfadjri* was undoubtedly correct when it claimed that the third anniversary "a été marqué ... par une quasi-indifférence" (2004a)

‘exposés’ in the national press. In a front-page feature *Walfadjri* asked *Pourquoi l’affaire Balla Gaye est difficile* (2004b). The initial enquiry identified a policeman – Thiendella Ndiaye – who they claimed was their primary suspect. However, he was declared innocent of the murder after being tried and acquitted by a military tribunal in 2003. Today it is often argued that he was a scapegoat, used to hide the real identity of the murderer.²²⁸

The remarkable fact in the multiple hypotheses that are advanced today is how little has changed since the murder. Then, each day brought new and more far-fetched explanations, as accusations and counter-accusations were flung at students, the government and the police. In this sense *Walfadjri* is wrong when it states that: “One hypothesis not accepted is that the murderer of their comrade is one of their own. Students even demanded that the state repatriates those students who left to study abroad.” A student assassin was among the first hypotheses put forward by politicians and the media. According to this argument today, there might have been a *brigade d’intervention efficace et rapide* (rapid intervention force) on the campus before Balla Gaye’s death, made up of armed students. A witness to the enquiry who had been in charge of security at the COUD seemed to confirm these theories, and testified that indeed there were “certain elements that moved around with fire arms” (*Walfadjri*, 2004a).²²⁹ Student leaders today are united in demanding that those ex-student leaders responsible for leading the strike are repatriated to answer questions about the murder.

In the *Walfadjri* report (2004b) the Minister of Justice Serigne Diop justified the failure to resolve the case by appealing to what he termed ‘similar’ cases: the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the Moroccan political leader Ben Barka, “the real authors are still being looked for today.”²³⁰ How can the most notorious assassination in the world more than forty years ago be the political equivalent to a student killed on a demonstration in Senegal three years ago? The comparison that at first sight may seem absurd illustrates

²²⁸ The government even sent for a ballistic expert from France – Jean Rochefort – to investigate the origin of the bullet but his report did nothing to resolve the affair.

²²⁹ “l’hypothèse jusqu’ici non admise, que le meurtrier de leur camarade soit un des leurs, les étudiants avaient même exigé de l’Etat qu’il fasse rapatrier ‘les étudiants qui sont partis à l’extérieur’” ; “éléments circulaient avec des armes à feu.”

²³⁰ “on cherche encore aujourd’hui les véritables auteurs.”

both the enormous importance of students in Senegal, but also the cynicism of a government who has failed to resolve the ‘assassination’.²³¹

The death of Balla Gaye determined the course of student politics in the years to follow, and was the key juncture in the movement after the election of Wade. What was Wade’s relationship to youth and students after his election? How was this relationship affected by the student strike in 2001? Madiop Biteye gives the ‘party response’ to the question:

... just after the election he named a young man to head the newly created Ministry of Youth. In the same way he nominated many young directors. He advocated for thirteen young deputies in the *Assemblée Nationale* and equally in the recent government there are at least three ministers who have not reached thirty-five, and one minister [Sow] who is twenty-six years old. That is an indicator of the importance that he accords Senegalese youth and he always says ‘Youth is worth more than the millions from abroad’ because he knows what young people did for him. Therefore youth played a central role in the realisation of the *alternance* (Interview, 5 February 2004).²³²

Wade has made use of students in the government, as deputies, advisors and ministers. These ex-students from the period of ‘*alternance*’ were key militants in the student movement during the presidential elections (and to a lesser extent the legislative elections the following year). There are several key factors in this process. Many ex-student leaders maintain a close – even intimate – relationship with the university after they have ascended to government. The Minister of Youth, Aliou Sow – who is twenty-six years old and referred to in the press as the ‘*étudiant-ministre*’ – is also a part-time lecturer in the English Department, or more accurately a ‘guest lecturer’. He is also completing his PhD.²³³ Yankhoba Diatara,²³⁴ like his friend and fellow PDS member Aliou Sow, is also completing his PhD at the university. Both regard the university as

²³¹ The government uses the term ‘assassination’, implying an elaborate and complicated plot. This presumably makes it difficult for them to discover who was responsible.

²³² “... Juste après son élection il a nommé un jeune à la tête du Ministère de la jeunesse qui venait juste d’être créé. Il a également nommé beaucoup de jeunes directeurs. Il a investi treize jeunes députés à l’Assemblée Nationale et dans le récent gouvernement également, il y a eu au moins trois ministres qui n’ont pas encore trente-cinq ans et un ministre qui a vingt-six ans. Ca, c’est l’importance qu’il accorde à la jeunesse sénégalaise et il dit partout que la jeunesse, ‘la disponibilité de la jeunesse vaut mieux que les milliards de l’étranger parce qu’il sait ce que la jeunesse a fait pour lui. Donc les jeunes ont joué un rôle vraiment particulier dans la réalisation de l’Alternance.”

²³³ During the interview with him he took me across his palatial office to his desk and announced: “This is my doctorate” presenting me with a wad of paper, “I have just returned from a session with my supervisor M. Gaye [Head of the English Department at the UCAD]” (Interview, 28 January 2004).

²³⁴ Who was a government advisor and permanent secretary to the powerful Thies City Council (the second city) and a confidant of the Prime Minister Idrissa Seck.

the key base of their political power, beyond the uncertainties of political office. The university secures them a tenuous independence from their political masters and an independent source of authority. Sow – often regarded as the youthful mouthpiece of Wade – demonstrated this during a controversial government reshuffle in April 2004. To the astonishment of many observers he defied the president by threatening his own resignation if Modou Diagne Fada²³⁵ – another ex-student leader with widespread support on the campus – was not given a post in the government. *Walfadjri* could not disguise its shock and indignation that “never has a Minister of the Republic dared to be so impertinent to the head of state.” The reasons that these acts had not been punished are close to the mark, “the president does not want to have a group of youth from his party on his back. Especially after the eviction of Idressa Seck who carries with him an important part of the PDS youth” (2004c).²³⁶

This process reveals a further important factor in student politics. Student activism at the university is the arena *par excellence* where ‘politicians’ are formed. It is not foreign-educated students who become political leaders, but those who have been baptised by student politics in Senegal. This serves the political establishment, in that ex-student leaders are able to ‘deliver’ the university to the government and to a certain extent ‘demobilise’ the campus after ‘*changement politique*’. It is not only rich foreign-educated sons and daughters of politicians,²³⁷ returning from Harvard or the Sorbonne, who become leading members of the political class, but those who were involved in the grass-root mobilisations in the student movement.

This observation can be extended into some general conclusions. While the UCAD is a vital site for the acquisition of political capital, there is an important further source: the ‘expatriated’ student who acquires a foreign and ‘technical’ training enters the Senegalese political scene and frequently achieves high office. However, the importance of the national ‘university’ cannot be exaggerated. While some students might pursue

²³⁵ The principal student leader in the late 1980s and 1990s and the Minister of the Environment under Wade.

²³⁶ “un ministre de la république ... n’avait jamais osé pousser aussi loin l’outrecuidance devant un chef de l’Etat.”

“le président Wade ne veut pas avoir sur le dos une frange des jeunes de son parti. Surtout après l’éviction d’Idressa Seck qui a avec lui une importante partie de la jeunesse libérale.”

²³⁷ Who in sending their children abroad – regarded as faintly contemptuous by students in Senegal – condemn them to political obscurity.

their studies abroad, for many students their relationship to the university and the collective memory of their activism at the university is an essential element in their future political trajectory.

These are common facts on campus and repeated frequently by student activists. Diatara makes the same point: “But it must be said that today all political leaders ... have been leaders in their time at university. In Senegal ... the university has played a formative political role ... of political education” (Interview, 9 February). Ibrahima Ba makes a similar point by referring to students as intellectuals: “It is not possible to bring about a large project without intellectuals ... who make and remake the governments of Senegal. It is something that must not be forgotten. They play a very important role in the elections” (Interview, 12 February 2004).²³⁸ For the government, therefore, we can identify a twin-pronged approach that included the ‘exile’ of troublesome (although ultimately compliant) student leaders and the cooption of others with a proven track record in campus politics. Both strategies serve the same purpose: to placate the student population and demobilise student organisations.

While corruption, as Abdoulaye describes, is widespread on the campus and permeates many levels of student politics, it is in many ways a logical reaction to the crippling poverty on campus. It is also an equally logical strategy to the permanent crisis of graduate unemployment. If changing political allegiance – *transhumance politique* – was rife among *les grands* before and after the *alternance* then it also existed at the university (Niang, 2004: 79-119) and secured employment for a number of student leaders. As Seydi comments: “If you come from a poor background and you are a member of the movement, you have connections and access to money ... that can be hard to resist” (Interview, 18 March). But both this cooption and corruption on campus are resisted by many students.

The UED was fatally crippled by the strategy employed by the government. By 2002 UED had been rendered impotent: by 2003 it was killed off by the refusal of faculty

²³⁸ “Mais il faut dire qu’aujourd’hui tous les leaders politiques ... ont été des leaders au niveau de l’université. Presque au Sénégal ... l’université a joué un rôle de formateur ... de formation....”

“On ne peut pas réaliser quelque chose de grand sans les intellectuels ... qui font et refont les régimes au Sénégal. C’est quelque chose, quand même, qu’il ne faut pas oublier. Ils jouent un rôle très important dans les échéances électorales.”

unions to send delegates to it (Seydi, Interview, 18 March). As Hamidou Ba summarises, “at the time of the death of Balla Gaye, there was a union that brought all students together ... [after his death] members of the UED all left for France ... the government judged it necessary to keep them at a distance from the country ... to calm the situation ... those who stayed did not have much influence” (Interview, 28 January, 2004).²³⁹ Although in early 2004 – again under the guiding hand of the rector – a new initiative was launched to establish *l’Union Générale des Etudiants de Dakar* (UGED) but this has currently come to nothing. The effect on student participation was clear: in the legislative elections in April 2001 it fell from the high of the previous year and was negligible in the local elections in 2002 (Seydi, Interview, 18 March).

6:4:6 Students: ‘intellectuals’ and ‘turn coats’

One of the first things that struck visitors to the campus of Cheikh Anta Diop university in early 2004 was the graffiti. Four years before the walls had been festooned with slogans supporting the *alternance politique*, often lampooning the ruling party. Today the old slogans have been mostly covered up and are replaced by new ones: “153 voyages en 3 ans” (153 trips in 3 years) scrawled on the side of *pavillon A* (the oldest hall of residence). On the public toilets beside the English department the message is different but the critique just as harsh: “Wade: l’ennemi du savoir” (Wade the enemy of knowledge). Wade and the *changement* he symbolised have become legitimate targets for student anger and frustration.

Pape Birame Ndiaye²⁴⁰ – a long-time militant of the PDS – while proclaiming the virtues of student activism could not disguise a certain irritation at their incessant opposition (to all governments, parties and authorities – even those they helped to put in place). “But you must understand that students have their own characteristics” he declared, “even if students have elected someone they will not issue a blank cheque ... if you are elected today, and tomorrow you do not do what they want ... they will attack you, take you on. That is the general characteristic of students” (Interview, 18 February

²³⁹ “au moment de la mort de Balla Gaye on avait un syndicat qui réunissait tous les étudiants ... [après sa mort] les membres de l’UED sont tous partis en France ... le gouvernement a jugé nécessaire de les éloigner du pays ... pour qu’on puisse calmer la situation ... ceux qui sont restés n’ont pas trop d’influence.”

²⁴⁰ Currently (2004) a senior civil servant in the *Conseil régional de Dakar*.

2004). There are few I suspect who would disagree with his account of *leurs caractéristiques* (their characteristics). But there is also a slight complacency in Ndiaye's analysis. This centres around the notion that all students, in all places in the world have the same 'characteristics' and essentially the same activism. Ndiaye puts the typical argument "You must see ... that everywhere in the world ... students [are] ... the most enlightened group of society."²⁴¹ This is the 'common sense' understanding of student activism. If this was indeed the case there would be no need to analyse their activism, it would suffice to write "students all struggle and demonstrate in same way. Students in Tiananmen Square in 1989, apart from some local nuances, are the same as those in Senegal."

To determine what is unique about the activism of students in Senegal we have to return to the testimony of student activists. Central to the conception of a 'student' is their self-identity as 'intellectuals', as Mor Faye – the general secretary of MEES – describes, students are a *jeunesse intellectuelle* (intellectual youth).²⁴² Faye explains that as students:

We struggle ... to understand economic, political, scientific and intellectual mechanisms so tomorrow, when we are adults, ... the country will have need of us ... Today as an intellectual and as a student, if I visit my family, I say to everyone, "here you are; for these reasons support the *Parti socialiste*." They will do this for me alone [and] I convince thousands of people. If each student [says] ... to their parents ... you put me in school so that I can help you tomorrow therefore I ask you to support this candidate because with their political programme I am sure that I will be able to reach my objectives and to help you (Interview, 5 February 2004).²⁴³

Students played a crucial role in spreading the ideas of *sopi* across the country during the elections. Certain student activists have a keen sense of their ability to shape the

²⁴¹ "Mais il faut également savoir que les étudiants ont leurs caractéristiques" he declared, "Les étudiants même s'ils ont élu quelqu'un on ne veut pas dire qu'ils vous donnent un chèque en blanc ... Même s'ils vous ont élu aujourd'hui, demain si vous ne faites pas ce qui les arrange ... ils vont attaquer et ils vont combattre. Ca c'est la caractéristique des étudiants d'une manière générale."

"Il faut voir ... partout dans le monde ... les étudiants [sont] ... la frange la plus éclairée de la société."

²⁴² 'Intellectual' has different significance in French and English, but I would dispute that French undergraduates regard themselves as 'intellectuals'.

²⁴³ "nous nous battons ... pour comprendre les mécanismes économiques, politique, scientifique et intellectuels, donc demain quand nous serons adultes ... le pays aura besoin de nous ... Aujourd'hui, moi, en tant qu'intellectuel et tant qu'étudiant, si je pars dans ma famille, je dis à tout le monde vraiment voilà, pour ces raisons-là, soutenez le PS. Ils vont le faire à moi seul je convainc des milliers de personnes. Si chaque étudiant [dit] ... à ses parents ... vous m'avez mis à l'école pour que je puisse vous aider demain donc je vous demande vraiment de soutenir ce candidat parce qu'avec le programme de ce candidat je suis sûr que j'arriverai, moi, à atteindre mes objectifs pour vous aider."

political choices of others. Hamidou Ba who was active in the '*alternance*' at the university explains why students were so effective in disseminating the message of the election:

students represent a very important force for the political system ... even if he could have won without students you must recognise that they constitute 40 percent of the vote that brought him to power. Understand that there are 40,000 students and each one of them raised the awareness of people in their village or neighbourhood to vote for Wade. Each student is connected to a family network in Senegal and these networks are made up of between 30-50 families. For example, I am from the region of Kolda; I can go to my family and I tell everyone to vote for Wade, [and] because it is Hamidou who comes from Dakar who tells us, it is advice that is followed. That is why I said that students made up a fundamental pillar in the victory of Wade because they are the conduit of information across the country. They have been the pillars of communication. Without students it would have been difficult for him to have won.²⁴⁴

Linked to their capacity to *sensibiliser* the population is their socially recognised position as privileged political actors, informed about national and international affairs and belonging to an urban world. A central element to Hamidou's influence in Kolda was that – as he explained – he came 'from Dakar'. Hamidou describes the role of students in Senegal well when he says:

... they are listened to and they are regarded as people who are ... the most well informed, they are considered to be the enlightened of the villages ... of the localities... therefore when students arrive they are listened to [and] one waits for their opinions on political life, the economy and the social situation of the country (Interview 28 January 2004).

This element of student identity made them ideal political actors during the electoral campaign in 1999 and 2000. As we have seen they were sent into rural areas "to

²⁴⁴ "Les étudiants constituent une force très importante pour le pouvoir politique... même s'il pouvait gagner sans les étudiants, il faut reconnaître que ces derniers constituent 40% du scrutin qui l'a mené au pouvoir. Si vous imaginez qu'il y a 40,000 étudiants et que chacun d'eux va sensibiliser les gens de son village pour qu'ils votent pour Wade, ou les gens de son quartier pour qu'ils votent pour leur leader. Chaque étudiant est connecté à un système familial, au Sénégal ces systèmes sont constitués de 30 à 50 familles. Par exemple, moi, je suis de la région de Kolda, je vais dans ma famille et je demande à tout le monde de voter pour Wade, qui est le meilleur, et chaque membre de ma famille va dans une autre famille pour l'inviter à voter pour Wade parce que Hamidou qui vient de Dakar le demande, et ainsi de suite. C'est pourquoi j'ai dit que les étudiants constituent un pilier fondamental de la victoire de Wade parce qu'ils ont véhiculé l'information, l'ont diffusée. Ils ont été les piliers de la communication. Sans les étudiants il lui serait difficile de gagner."

convince their parents and their region of the necessity of voting for the change” (Ndiaye, Interview, 18 February 2004).²⁴⁵

Mor Faye makes a similar point, “our parents speak of culture, religion and other things typically African, but about politics and the government for example [and] all that comes to us from outside. It is us [students] who have learnt about them at school and university. It is us who understand what a computer is. Our parents understand well that we know some things that they don’t.” In this sense the university – even more so than the school – is foreign space: in Faye’s terms a European one. It is located in an urban world far from the culture and geographical universe of the student’s parents. There is therefore, “a African culture and a culture that comes to us from Europe and that we have learnt. We have learnt this ‘culture’ and through us they will accept it” (Interview, 5 February, 2004).²⁴⁶ Students are transformed into the purveyors of a foreign world that exists far from their parents, and yet one that dominates their interaction with them. Faye’s use of *Europe* and *Africa* expresses the real division that separates the two worlds.²⁴⁷ This division illustrates how students could be used to transport the foreign world of urban politics to the countryside.

²⁴⁵ “... ils sont écoutés, on les regarde comme des gens ... les mieux informés, ils sont considérés comme les lumières du village ... de la localité donc quand les étudiants débarquent, on est à leur écoute, on attend d’eux qu’ils donnent leur opinion sur la vie politique, sur la vie économique, sur la vie sociale du pays”

“pour convaincre leurs parents, leurs populations sur la nécessité de voter pour le changement”

However it should be remembered that students in Senegal do not simply regard themselves as the ‘light’ but they will frequently say, as we have seen, ‘intellectuals’ that are responsible for the country’s intellectual development. Coudy Kane – a female doctoral student – distinguishes between youth and student intellectuals, “you can be young but be empty headed, but in the realm of ideas you must count on students to advance political change and the future needs such intellectuals and students” (“dans le monde des idées c’est sur eux qu’il faut compter demain aussi on peut être jeune mais sans avoir d’idée derrière la tête, des pensées à espérer un changement un jour mais avec les intellectuels et en tant qu’étudiante je pense qu’on a besoin vraiment dans l’avenir de vie intellectuelle”) Interview 14 February 2004. The motto for Cheikh Anta Diop University – emblazoned on their crest – is the Latin expression “*Lux Mea Lex*” (Light is my Law).

²⁴⁶ “les parents parlent de culture, parlent de religion [et] d’autres chose qui sont typiquement africains mais pour ce qui de la politique, pour ce qui est par exemple de gouvernement tout ça nous vient de l’extérieur, des Européens. C’est nous [les étudiants] qui avons appris ça au niveau des écoles, de l’université. C’est nous qui avons compris ce qu’est l’ordinateur. Les parents là aussi par modestie savent que nous savons quelque chose qu’ils ne comprennent pas.”

“une culture africaine, [et] une culture qui nous vient d’Europe qu’on nous a apprise. Nous qui l’avons apprise, si on vient ils vont l’accepter.”

²⁴⁷ The university is not only a place of foreign enlightenment but also - and presumably equally European in this respect – of debauchery and vice. Deme’s (2002) text *l’Autre Université* can be read as a polemic against these excesses.

But how does the conception of students as enlightened political actors sit with the corruption of student activism? Cherif Ba describes the university as a space of heightened political emotions, “the ‘university space’ in political terms is not a neutral one. In fact this space is over-politicised” But the politics and activism that exists on campus – according to Ba – is cynical, corrupt and unprincipled. Contrary to an early generation of student leaders – Bathily and Savane are examples frequently cited (often by themselves) – today’s students are irredeemably corrupt. And most students:

launch themselves into politics for other reasons. Question a student from the PDS about ‘liberalism’; ask him what are the foundations of ... political liberalism ... they will know nothing about it. They don’t read economic theories ... Rather they think: “there you are. I am in a party, I will remain there, I have my card, there is a small meeting called, I go to it. Political leaders must see that I am there and that I am active, that I participate in a ‘tam-tam’ in my neighbourhood.” This is all there is to it. (Interview, 12 February 2004).

There is undoubtedly an element to Ba’s account that is true; a deep layer of cynicism exists in student politics. But his argument has to be qualified. He is speaking specifically of the activity of political parties on campus and if student activism is condemned as corrupt by an older generation of student leaders and politicians then they too must take a share of the blame. Who, after all, helped to corrupt it? Bathily – the quintessential Senegalese intellectual-politician – has been forthright in criticising the ideological weaknesses in contemporary student activism. However, in his capacity as the leader of an influential party of the left, he must share at least some of the responsibility for this degeneration. After all, as Ba explains:

political parties must take responsibility for raising the political level of their activists. But what party does this? ... therefore activists don’t get the basic training they must ... political involvement is simply engaged in ... to welcome the president.”²⁴⁸

²⁴⁸ “Je vous dis que l’espace universitaire sur le plan politique n’est pas un espace neutre. L’espace universitaire est hyperpolitisé.”

“lancés dans la politique uniquement pour autre choses. Vous interrogez un étudiant libéral, vous lui dites quelles sont les bases ... du libéralisme... il n’y connaît rien du tout. Ils ne lisent pas des théories économiques... Bon, je suis dans un parti, je reste, j’ai ma carte, il y a une petite réunion qui était convoquée, j’y vais. Il faut que le dirigeant voie que je suis là, que je suis actif, que je participe à un tam-tam dans le quartier. Oui c’est tout.”

“les partis politiques doivent assumer la formation de leurs militants. Quel est le parti politique qui fait ça? ... les militants n’ont pas la formation de base qu’il faut. ... on fait de la politique tout simplement ... pour aller accueillir un président.”

Politicians also positively encourage student activism, as part of the prerequisites of good citizenship. Abdoulaye Wade, for example, makes this clear when he explains the responsibilities for students today:

While the corruption of political activism is an undeniable feature of campus life it has to be seen in a wider context.²⁴⁹ Firstly, the movement has been strangled by the systematic cooption and corruption of an important layer of student activists.²⁵⁰ The movement was to a large extent powerless – ideologically and organisationally – to resist this cooption because it had been formed as part of the nation-wide campaign for *sopi* in 1999. To a certain extent its *raison d'être* predetermined its subsequent dissolution into the structures of the PDS. It is undoubtedly a source of weakness that the movement was unable to survive the Wade experience; however, many student activists were able to remain free of the party's grasp. There is, of course, a further element to Ba's comments; they can be seen as a generational critique of the student movement that glorifies the period of political mobilisation in 1968 and 1988, while lamenting the 'bread and butter politics' of student activism today: an argument that is hard to defend after student participation in 2000.

6:4:7 Summary: virtual power and virtual universities

There is a sense today among many of the participants in the *alternance* of great disappointment. For some it was an historic opportunity that has been tragically scuppered. In the first half of 2004 militants of the two main leftwing political parties – LD and AJ – were raising questions about their participation in a government of the

"the role of students is to study. The student must demonstrate that they are excellent in these studies. Afterwards young people must become engaged politically and develop an active involvement in society" ("la fonction de l'étudiant c'est d'étudier. Son rôle c'est de prouver qu'il est excellent dans les études. Et après, la jeunesse doit faire la politique. Elle doit avoir un engagement militant.") quoted by Aliou Sow in *Lux* (2003).

²⁴⁹ In important respects student slogans and mobilisations have profoundly changed. This is partly linked to an intelligent understanding of the limits of university education in Senegal. Almost all university students make yearly applications to study abroad, mostly in France. There is an informal trade in *Coupon de réponse internationale* on campus, which cost CFA1,000 and are required by French universities if you want a response to your application. Students also repeatedly raise the slogan of the allocation of 'visas'.

²⁵⁰ *Transhumance politique* is an important phenomenon on campus and at all levels of student activism. Among the leadership it involved Aliou Sow leaving the group of Socialist-supporting students organised by Dethie Diouf in 1999, while Dethie Diouf (slower to catch on) abandoned his old political allies to join the PDS in 2001 (after the strike). As Ndiaye recalls: "He addressed a letter to me when he wanted to join in 2001" ("Il m'avait adressé une lettre quand il a adhéré en 2001") Interview, 18 February, 2004. However, Aliou Sow makes it clear that despite this violence he holds no grudges today: "Today those who attacked me and beat me up have become my friends and they are indebted to me for lots of things. Simply because I accepted their repentance and proved that we are over the past" ("Aujourd'hui tous ceux qui m'ont agressé sont devenus mes amis et me sont redevables de beaucoup de choses. Simplement parce que j'ai accepté leur repentir et fait preuve de dépassement") *Lux* (2003).

neo-liberal right (*Sud Quotidien*, 2004). “What are we doing” asked one delegate in a meeting in March “supporting a government that advocates further privatisation of our national heritage?”²⁵¹ While it might have been possible for Bathily to convince himself for a short time that Wade was a closet socialist posing for the international community as a neo-liberal (*Sud Quotidien*, 2003) it was impossible to believe this by the end of 2003. In October 2003 he complained about being stopped constantly on the street and forced to justify the behaviour of the government: “Each day I am stopped in the street, ‘Waa yeen seen president bi, votre gouvernement-là, why have you done this or that?’” The contrast with the euphoria of victory could not be greater: “This great enthusiasm, this immense mobilisation, the huge expectations from everyone.” Yet the historical moment was missed by a government that quickly resumed the old politics: “It is in these moments that a country can make great advances. Among the masses, we could have made enormous strides. But in its place the worst habits of the former regime are being recycled” (*Walfadjri*, 2003).²⁵² The government has recycled the old elites, who willingly came under the umbrella of the PDS (see Abrahamsen, 2001).

When Wade was asked to account for his government’s achievements after the first four years of the *alternance*, he boasted that today he was one of the “one of the principal interlocutors of the western world ... today when African leaders are spoken of there is ... a francophone.” But even more than this, Wade now claimed to have established a close relationship with George Bush who, “has been kind enough to consult me on large problems.” Wade’s role as international mediator, consultant and middleman was apparently assisted by Chirac “he [Chirac] has fought for me to become an interlocutor” (*Le Soleil*, 2004).²⁵³ This a clear demonstration of the role of compliant African leaders in the international pecking order: if they obey orders from their geo-political bosses

²⁵¹ I was present at their meeting *L’alternance à mi-parcours, quels défis à relever?* (20 March 2004). They decided to boycott the official PDS celebrations for the fourth anniversary of *alternance*. The criticism of privatisation was particularly sharp because of the proposed privatisation of the *Loterie Nationale Sénégalaise* (LONASE).

²⁵² “On m’interpelle chaque jour dans la rue ‘Waa yeen seen president bi, votre gouvernement-là, pourquoi vous avez fait ceci?’”

“Cet immense enthousiasme, cette immense mobilisation, cette attente des gens de toutes conditions.”

“C’est dans ces moments qu’un pays peut faire des progrès significatifs. Dans la foulée, on aurait pu faire beaucoup de réformes. Mais en lieu et place, on a commencé à prendre et à recycler ce que l’ancien système avait de pire.”

²⁵³ “principaux interlocuteurs du monde occidental...aujourd’hui quand on parle de leader de l’Afrique il y a ... un francophone.”

“me fait l’amitié de me consulter sur les grands problèmes.”

“lui [Chirac] il se bat pour que je sois un interlocuteur.”

they may be permitted to give advice. Wade's celebration of this role is illustrative of the impotence of post-colonial political power in Africa: a world of virtual power.

When Wade returned to the university for the first time since his election victory for the inauguration of UCAD II in March 2004,²⁵⁴ he received a decidedly mixed response. Although crowds of bussed-in school students dutifully shouted *sopi, sopi*, university students were visibly absent. They left complaining that there were too many unsolved problems at the university to celebrate (*Sud Quotidien*, 2004b). The inauguration resembled a Hollywood award ceremony with elaborate police escorts heralding the arrival of the Prime Minister and then, with even greater pomp, the President. However the centrepiece of the inauguration was the demonstration by Wade of a *Université Virtuelle d'Afrique* (VUA) where courses will be taught 'virtually' through satellite links with French, American and Canadian universities. This will ensure, according to Wade, that "the diploma in the end will not be equivalent but the same" (*Le Soleil*, 2004).²⁵⁵ The VUA will mean students no longer need to travel overseas as the world will have come to Senegal: "Those who will have the diploma from this university will not need to go to the US to study." Appropriately in a world of virtual power here is the virtual university.²⁵⁶

There are many elements to this virtual universe for university students in Senegal, as the West shuts down the possibilities of obtaining visas and scholarships. Wade's globalisation has offered young people a tantalising illusion. The paraphernalia of this illusion – mobile phones, internet connection, the VUA and advanced technology – reinforce the frustration of a 'global community', a 'community' that seems to offer them access to the world while simultaneously confining them and restricting their real opportunities. Even the classic demands of the student movement become strangely 'virtual'. Today students often mobilise not for government employment – long regarded as a pipe dream – but visas to escape.

²⁵⁴ The ambitious new extension of the University in Dakar.

²⁵⁵ Wade's lecture was interesting in itself. It was a serious exposé of the reasons for Africa's underdevelopment. Although his conclusions were typically neo-liberal, arguing that Africa must follow the west and attract private investors, his style was professorial to the extent that his academic justification of NEPAD on a flipchart involved mathematical formulas that were both utterly obscure, and impossible to see, for most of the 1,500 people present.

²⁵⁶ "Le diplôme, à la fin, sera non pas équivalent mais le même."

"Ceux qui auront le diplôme de cette université n'auront pas besoin d'aller aux Etats-Unis pour étudier."

This is connected directly to some of the arguments advanced in chapter 3 (see section 3:4 above). An analysis of the *power geometry* of globalisation exposes the simultaneous confining and restricting of certain geographical regions and social groups, at the same time as others benefit from the contraction of space through improvements in mobility and communications (Harvey, 1989). Massey (1994: 150) describes this contradiction in the context of the export of Brazilian music, and the contribution to cultural globalisation by those living in the south:

The people who live in the *favelas* of Rio ... who gave us the samba and produced the lambada that everyone was dancing to last year in the clubs of Paris and London; and who have never, or hardly ever, been to downtown Rio. At one level they have been tremendous contributors to what we call time-space compression; and at another level they are imprisoned in it.

These contradictions lie at the heart of a cosmopolitan and globalised capitalism and reveal a highly complex pattern of geographical inequality. The global economy has lead to the spatial imprisonment of huge numbers of the world's poor, who are perhaps more confined then they have ever been (Harding, 2000). Students in Senegal are imprisoned in a world that boasts an apparent acceleration across space (Friedman, 2005).

6:5 Conclusion

In conclusion, the first point is the importance, indeed the centrality, of student politics in Senegalese society. The student movement has the ability to dominate the political scene. Although the campus is often riven by political differences, students are politically privileged actors who see their mobilisations magnified onto a national canvas. In this context their voices – of complaint and resistance – are amplified far beyond the campus. Yet the weaknesses of the student movement are enormous. Student activists lack, as Cherif Ba would have it, *la formation des militants* (training of activists) in the shape of independent ideological or organisational structures. These weaknesses left them powerless to resist the domination of the UED by the 'liberalism' of Wade and the eventual liquidation of the movement under the twin pressures of

cooption and corruption.²⁵⁷ Still, if these are criticisms of the student movement, then they are also valid of almost every political formation in Senegal over the last four years. However, students' amplified status and activism ensured that despite the corruption, poverty and political cynicism that frequently dominates life on campus, they were able to unite around the *alternance*, forge their own organisation between 1999 and 2000 and make a decisive contribution to the victory of the *changement politique*.

Although the conclusions from both case studies are discussed in more detail in the next chapter, it is important to examine briefly how the experience of Senegalese students directly relates to arguments being made in this thesis. There are two factors particular to the activism of students in Senegal that were discussed in chapter three. Students described their activism during the *alternance* in much the same way as Cliff (1963) explained the consciousness of the 'student-intelligentsia' (see section 3:2 above). They see themselves within a modernist paradigm, as vectors of social change. In Cliff's (1963: 20) words "They are great believers in efficiency." Senegalese students referred repeatedly to the distances (both geographical and metaphoric) that they travel to university, leaving a distinct and 'African' world for the 'European' one represented by the university. These journeys have been described in terms of pilgrimages in the academic literature (Gellner, 1983; Foucher, 2002a). These have important consequences for the activism of Senegalese students. It reflects an explicit elitism (that exists as part of their identity if not in their material conditions) that heightens the importance of their activism. Mor Faye described how students have learnt to operate in a modern world, replete with computers, the internet and political debate: "We have learnt this 'culture' and through us they [our parents] will accept it" (Interview, 5 February, 2004). Their status as politically privileged actors derives directly from this exaggerated notion of themselves, at once alienated and connected to the social world of their parents. These ideas formed much of the political and theoretical thinking after independence.

²⁵⁷ Although Wade's 'liberalism' was certainly not evident in his attitude towards university reforms, he resorted to a familiar pattern of 'crisis management' that involved breaking with the advice of the World Bank. The 'liberalism' referred to is the dominate *laissez faire* politics of the Washington Consensus that has been accepted more or less unanimously by the political class in Senegal.

The direction the Senegalese student movement took in the 1990s also reflects a central theme in the thesis. The weakness of their organisational forms (and ideas) – partly as a result of the collapse of the Berlin Wall – contributed to the disintegration of the movement that is described above. If students as political agents act to change their ‘inherited conditions’, then they also construct organisations, parties, unions – ideological and organisational tools – to assist them in these transformations. These are at once reflections of their inherited circumstances (in the case of Senegal replicating the failures of the left) and an attempted rejection of them. The inability of the student movement to protect itself from Wade and the PDS is illustrative of these tensions, and the capacity of student activists to exercise meaningful agency. Although these were obstacles for students in Zimbabwe there were several important differences. The following chapter reflects on the two case studies.

Chapter 7

Students of the transition: the meaning of student protest

7:1 Introduction

Students have evolved from being a 'transitory' social group in the immediate post-independence period. They were privileged by a state that was able to play an influential role in economic development. Later the conditions in the universities rapidly deteriorated, but still students clung to an earlier elitism. The processes of pauperisation across Africa during this period battered students' privileged access to the state. However the increasing convergence with other social groups brought about a new and dynamic relationship between students and wider social forces in the successive waves of protest and the political mobilisation in the 1980s and 1990s. These transitions were elusive and contradictory processes, often led by an opposition that advocated the policies of neo-liberalism which had galvanised the protest movements in the first place. In these confusing and contradictory times, student activism retained characteristics from their earlier 'transitory' phase, still regarding their activism as privileged and frequently couching it in an elitist discourse. However in many respects their activism had been substantially transformed by the collapse of state development and the onset of structural adjustment (see section 3:4 above).

The essential theme of the thesis is the exploration of the extent to which students exercise political agency, and how the opportunities for this agency are enabled and constrained by historical and geographical circumstances. Students in post-colonial Africa have had a politically privileged status that is linked to a range of factors described in earlier chapters. Their capacity to act as *meaningful* agents of political change has been affected by a range of changing circumstances in the last thirty years. These are connected to wider global changes, which have impacted on graduate unemployment and privatisation. Student movements in sub-Saharan Africa had long drawn on a political tradition that derived from a Stalinised Marxism. But the collapse of Stalinist regimes, linked to the changes in the global economy (Harman, 1990;

Callinicos, 1991), brought about a profound change in the ideological and political landscape. Although the democratic transitions were marked by a student *avant-garde* that frequently set off a wider convergence of social forces, these movements were marked by a political confusion, and an opposition that promised ‘democratic change’ (literally *sopi* and *chinja* in Senegal and Zimbabwe) and a return to a version of the neo-liberal reforms of the incumbent regimes. Still even without coherent political philosophies, students were able to play a part in changing governments and achieving changes in national policy. This chapter explores the question of what constitutes agency, and examines how students in the altered and peculiar circumstances of the transitions in the 1990s were able to exercise *meaningful* political agency.

This chapter also brings together the principal conclusion from the study. It argues that the meaning of student protest in sub-Saharan Africa can only be understood in the context of the historical evolution of student action. The first section offers a reconceptualisation of student activism in Senegal and Zimbabwe. This is followed by an examination of the experiences of Zimbabwean students, and some of the principal – and revealing – differences between the two case studies. There is then an attempt to draw out some of the historical and theoretical ideas described in earlier chapters. The final sections re-examine the inherently contradictory nature of the democratic transitions, and the transformation of student activism in an era of globalisation.

7:2 Dividing lines: student activism, politics and mobilisation

Much of the literature on student politics in Senegal divides the student movement into distinct periods. Perhaps the most common is the categorisations given to student activism by an older generation of student leaders, who are now part of Senegal’s political and intellectual elite. Bathily *et al* (1995) claimed that the student movement reached its zenith in the 1960s and 1970s, declining in the 1980s to reach its current impasse. Today students have lapsed into a ‘daily corporatism’ devoid of ideological debate and fighting over the scraps handed out by the state: increases in grants, reduction in the price of restaurant tickets and other economic demands. This approach has not, however, gone uncontested; Diouf (2002) presents a far more positive description of the evolution of youth activism in Senegal.

The most concerted attack on the idea of the irrevocable decline of the student movement is advanced by Bianchini (2002; 2004). These arguments are typical, he claims, of a generational critique that valorises the activism of the ‘authors’ while denigrating the present. Against these ideas he advances a notion of cycles of mobilisation, where student organisations periodically regroup to form university-wide unions to organise the student body over a set of defined objectives. However these structures decline and break up after the mobilisation has peaked.

Student mobilisation in Senegal, Bianchini explains, has always proceeded under the cover of economic demands; these have frequently been related to the level and distribution of the grant. In addition students have never acted on the basis of ‘pure independence’, free from the control of ‘external forces’. On the contrary, student mobilization has always included ‘external forces’. Students have been members of political parties and groups. It is no more satisfactory to say that student action is always the result of ‘outside’ manipulation (as the press normally howls during university strikes), than to say that ‘outside’ political parties are manipulated by students. Bianchini’s arguments have the advantage of explaining the consistency in student action. Students have continued to play a prominent role in national politics that has not irrevocably changed since their perceived heyday of the 1960s and 1970s. Bianchini (2004: 225) outlines these argument in his ground-breaking *Ecole et Politique en Afrique Noire*:

The hypothesis of a certain depolitisation of the campus ... can be seen as relative. What is obvious is that the international ideological context is not the same. But the dynamics of student mobilisation mean that it can never become totally pacified ... the cycles of mobilisation have always been linked to the appearance of new organisations... Equally, when a new crisis grips the campus the spectre of political manipulation is always the privileged interpretation of commentators. Therefore the thesis of the depolitisation of the student universe is regularly challenged by new developments of conflict between the *contestation éduquée* and political power.

There are two obvious benefits to this approach. Firstly, he acknowledges the *context idéologique* affecting student mobilisation and secondly he criticises the dominant notion of the ‘*dépolitisation*’ of student activism. These both represent enormous advances over the predominant literature and commentary. There are, however, serious problems with Bianchini’s counter position. What he fails to do is distinguish between

the real differences that separate the cycles of mobilisation that he refers to. Do these 'cycles' simply repeat themselves again and again? Is it only a question of identifying the next 'cycle'? What both Bathily *et al*, (1995) and Bianchini fail to do is develop a serious categorisation that links student activism to the political economy of post-independent Senegal and that identifies the contours of economic and political transformation, from the early state-led development through economic crisis to neo-liberalism and structural adjustment.

There are periods in Senegal's political and economic trajectory since independence that have impacted and helped to determine student activism. Between 1960 and 1975 the Senegalese government advocated state-led growth that, typical of economic orthodoxy at the time, was regarded as the key to development. Connected to these ideas was the role of university students as an affluent social group destined to become senior members in the new state apparatus. These were not pipe dreams. Graduates from the University of Dakar during this period could be fairly certain of work in the expanding civil service (Bathily, 1992).

Although students at the university were excluded from the material hardship of the overwhelming proportion of the population, these 'benefits' were being continually undermined and by the early 1970s they came under sustained attack. Still, the students' status gave them a degree of political autonomy to champion the cause of the poor, and the working class, without being poor or hungry themselves (even though they may have claimed they were). Students championed social change in the revolt of 1968 - and the unrest that continued throughout the early 1970s at the university. These revolts were animated and propelled by the ideological debates of the left at the time. This should not be surprising as the left was ascendant internationally, and the university was awash with political parties, clandestine groups and 'external forces' debating the direction of the movement, and the future of revolution and social change in Senegal (and the world) (Bianchini, 2004: 224-228).

The erosion of state-led development marked the period that followed. Between 1975 to 1990 Senegal was crippled by an economic crisis linked to the international recession in the early 1970s. The fall in the price of commodities severely affected Senegal, while rising costs in the public sector meant the country faced years of recession. Senegal was

one of the first sub-Saharan African countries to introduce structural adjustment programmes through the World Bank and the IMF in the early 1980s. The stated aim was to restore equilibrium to the country's finances. But one of the most commonly felt effects of these reforms were the policies of 'austerity' targeted at the public sector, which included the privatization and restructuring of the civil service, estimated at 60 percent of government expenditure in 1985 (Fall, 1997: xv). In addition the corruption and inaction of the political class helped to further paralyse the country.

During this period the assurances of graduate employment given to university students quickly disintegrated, and so did their material status. Students found themselves living in conditions of increasing hardship, often having to support their parents on diminishing grants while themselves facing uncertain and frequently jobless futures. Though the political left dominated the campus scene in the early 1980s, the disorientation (and disorganisation) of left in the face of the onslaught of structural adjustment (and crucially the collapse of the Stalinist regimes at the end of the decade) saw the influence of Wade's *Parti Démocratique Sénégalais* (PDS) grow on campus.

Processes that had been underway in the previous decade were consummated between 1990 and 2000. The result of structural adjustment programmes was clear for anyone who cared to draw the lessons. According to the World Bank's own figures, the industrial sector lost more than 21 percent of its workforce in ten years. The trade union movement was also affected by restrictive legislation reducing the capacity to contest these job losses, which were implemented to "adapt the tools of production to the norms of competition."²⁵⁸ Though the *Parti Socialiste* (PS) claimed that these changes would help to attract international investment, one writer argued, "Fifteen years after the adoption of the first structural adjustment programme, the crisis is far from being solved"²⁵⁹ (Fall, 1997: xv).

Similar processes were at work in other African universities. In the Congo (Zaire) students had been able to advance some of the first and most powerful criticisms of the regime in the late 1960s and 1970s; they continued to resist the regime throughout the 1970s and in the lead up to the democratic changes in the early 1990s. Nzongola-Ntalaja

²⁵⁸ "adapter l'outil de production aux normes de la compétitivité."

²⁵⁹ "Quinze ans après l'adoption des programmes d'ajustement structurel, la crise est loin d'être jugulée"

(2002: 179) identifies the importance of the student movement, which was, “the single most important civil society organisation to challenge the Mobutu regime at the height of its power.” However, like their counterparts in Senegal and Zimbabwe, by the early 1980s students who had been privileged recipients of state patronage in the 1960s and 1970s suffered from the structural adjustment programmes that systematically bled resources from the state universities, institutions that were now regarded as over-bloated and mismanaged. Munikengi and Sangol (2004: 91) describe the collapse of student status at the University of Kinshasa: “Until the 1990s, students believed that their university diplomas were equivalent to titles of nobility ... By the early 1990s ... degrees still constituted social capital ... [but] if a job opportunity did miraculously present itself, they no longer ensured automatic recruitment.”

What is remarkable in the case studies is not so much the variations – significant though they are – but the convergence of both student movements. In many ways Zimbabwe bucked the continental trend, coming to independence twenty years after Senegal. After independence in 1980 the country embarked on an ambitious and widely supported programme of state provision of education and health. To many progressive activists and campaigners, the first years of independence seemed to confirm the progressive nature of the liberation struggle that had taken place in the 1960s and 1970s (Mandaza, 1986). Between 1980 and 1988, while these reforms were sweeping Zimbabwe, university student activists were largely supportive of state-led development, seeing themselves as the new ‘student-intelligentsia’ or ‘revolutionary intellectuals’ (*The Herald*, 1988) who would continue the work of those who had fought for independence. However by the end of the decade the sheen had rubbed off many of the former heroes of national liberation. Students – privileged and largely cut-off from the rest of society – were the first to publicly criticise the regime. From 1988 to 1995 they became trenchant critics of the government, identifying and attacking what they saw as a ruling trinity linking a corrupt regime, an ‘unrattled Rhodesian elite’ and the introduction of the first structural adjustment programme in 1991 (see section 5:2:3 above).

By 1995 university students were no longer ‘lone rangers’ but increasingly one element in an alienated and radicalised civil society. Their ‘rarefied’ life at the university that one student leader described as ‘Christmas everyday’, rapidly unraveled. By the late 1990s students – though still regarding themselves as politically privileged – had started

to describe their lives at university in very different terms. Far from being 'Christmas everyday' students now suffered from 'Buns-itis' (an 'illness' caused by eating too many buns - the only food that students can afford). Dining halls had closed, with catering now provided in private outlets at prices that many students could not afford.²⁶⁰ Zimbabwe's university students had been dragged in a remarkably short period into a pauperised world, no longer able to support their parents (who faced the same hardships). As Kagoro has explained these developments:

the prices for almost everything were liberalised, you raise the fuel price, and everything just shot up. And the government had the largest number of redundancies, so you now had students supporting their parents on their student stipends, which were not enough, because their parents had been laid off work. So in a sense as poverty increases you have a reconvergence of these forces (Interview, 23 June 2003).

These processes, that were at work across the continent, affected and transformed Zimbabwean and Senegalese student activism.

Students in Senegal and Zimbabwe maintained an identity that was redolent of an earlier 'elitism'. Students of the transition were in many ways the direct inheritors of a former activism. They still saw their movements as 'privileged', crossing the divide from a traditional (and African) society to a modern (and European) one symbolised by the university. Similar to Cliff's (1963) 'student-intelligentsia' they were acutely aware of the divide between their parents' social world and their newly discovered one. Their activism cast in this mould was still regarded as the means by which 'development' (and 'democratisation') could be achieved.

But it is this sense of escape from the social world they emerged from that has eroded in the last two decades. The alienation of student activists from the realities of their countries political economy was the *raison d'être* of the student movement in the first decades of independence. They saw themselves as the unique vectors of change (see section 3:3 above). The students involved in the transition, while often conceptualizing their activism within the prism of the 1960s and 1970s, became more modest agents of social change.

²⁶⁰ Catering facilities were taken back into central university control in 2004 after almost six years of privatisation (see *The Herald*, 2004).

However the unique space of the university (see section 4:5 above), which was often identified as a crucial element in the effective mobilisations of students in the 1960s (Halliday, 1969), still played an important role in the transitions. In Zimbabwe students at the University of Zimbabwe had a ‘freedom’ to act (and to be beaten up) that was far more difficult in the constrained spaces of the city. In 2003 students were the only group that could mobilise in the week of action – the ‘final push’ - in June 2003 when the rest of urban society had been militarised (see also Zeilig, 2004a). In this context Halliday’s (1969: 323) argument, far more that twenty five years ago, is still valid: “Their relatively privileged social status ... often makes student protests possible, when all other social groups are shackled by military coercion.” But this action is limited, and without the crucial ‘convergence of forces’ students, though able to engage the regime in heroic acts of resistance, are unable to bring about the transitions. As we will see it was only when students were able to unleash a more paralysing movement connected to the trade unions that these transitions could emerge. However even then this ‘transition’ (see section 4:7 above) returned to a familiar rhythm of structural adjustment and neo-liberal reforms.

These developments are connected to the ascendancy of neo-liberalism and private capital that was facilitated by the collapse of the Berlin wall. The left, who had dominated opposition politics since the 1960s in Senegal and empowered the national liberation movement in Zimbabwe, were suddenly without an ideological head and conceded that there probably was not an alternative to capitalism, only strategies to reform its hard edges (Slovo, 1990). In Senegal the PDS did not have to make any such concessions. Bianchini (2004: 226-7) makes this point well:

During these years the parties of the Marxist left underwent the effects of an ideological crisis ... while a new era presented itself with the involvement in the government of leading members belonging to parties like the PIT in 1991, then the LD in 1993. Teaching unions suddenly found themselves in the position of having a minister from their own ranks, now in charge of applying ‘educational adjustment’ that together they had fought against in the previous years. The basis of the debate on the collapse of political demands in the 1970s to social ones in the 1990s can only be understood in this way, as the lost of ideological bearings for the Senegalese left. This explanation does not, of course, only apply to Senegal ... where the parties

of the left were only able to play a secondary role within a game marked by the rise to power of a political alternative embodied by the PDS.

In this context *Sopi* emerged as a slogan that brought together the collective grievances of students, workers and the poor. These grievances had arisen out of the austerity of structural adjustment. By the 1990s it was also – similar to *chinja* in Zimbabwe – a slogan that partly expressed the ideological vacuum left by the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Both these slogans were simultaneously a rejection of the politics of neo-liberalism, and a general statement for democratic change that could be brandished by almost any opposition force, including parties that advocated the same neo-liberalism. The 1990s also ushered in a second wave of popular protest, often explicitly political and with far-reaching aims and objectives. As we have seen, these movements were inherently contradictory, motivated by the rejection of the Washington consensus, but often led by forces loyal to this consensus. Political change in the 1990s in Senegal and Zimbabwe was part of the same pattern of social struggle (see section 3:6 above).

What had happened to student mobilisation in both countries? The period saw the rapid ‘proletarianisation’ of student status. Students were now living a precarious existence, with the hope of formal (state or private) employment receding even further into the distance. To a certain extent student life was dominated by a daily struggle to survive on campus, so by the end of the millennium most students sought to leave their countries, a desire that was coupled with increasingly draconian visa restrictions placed on third world countries by the West. Students fought over the few university-allocated scholarships to study in the west, or in Zimbabwe often tried to leave for South Africa. Student self-identity and the world they inhabited had fundamentally changed. These changes influenced their political demands and the frequency and levels of their participation in student action. While students had not collapsed into an apolitical corporatism, they were forced to negotiate a world that was collapsing under their feet (see section 4:3 above).

To return briefly to the argument made in Chapter 3. Students – in both Zimbabwe and Senegal – had been members of a transitory social group whose final social position had

not been decided, a decision that rested largely on the good offices of the state.²⁶¹ Correspondingly students regarded their activism as uniquely privileged, where they alone could effect social change. This 'transitory' status had almost completely withered by the mid-1980s and students were no longer 'passing through' university on the way to rewarding graduate employment, but frequently only to unemployment. University students became increasingly fixed features of the social world, with students no longer in 'transition' to another place. In Senegal the suicide of Cheikh Tidiane Fall in 2001 tragically expressed the frustrations of this failed 'transition'. His profile is strikingly similar to many students in Zimbabwe and Senegal: an excellent student at school; the only child in the family to have reached university, but failure forced him to repeat the same year several times. The university failed him repeatedly and as he tried in vain to find work at the age of 32 his will to live collapsed. The campus had become a hurdle that he could not cross (*Le Populaire*, 2001c). However, the generalisations about the unemployment of graduates and the transformation of student identity are reflective of the paucity of social science research on higher education in Africa. Mkude *et al* (2003) in a study of higher education in Tanzania are right to insist on further research into areas such as the employment of graduates.

7:3 Comparing the case studies: the scale of mobilisation

In many ways the case studies occupy very different worlds. The activism that they describe took place with very specific national, cultural and historical particularities (see part 5:1 and part 6:1 above). First of all, Senegalese university students had experienced a prolonged period of crisis and change under structural adjustment, whereas the decline in higher education in Zimbabwe was far more dramatic and the crisis in legitimacy for the regime far more recent.

The differences between the case studies reveal some important features of student activism. The first most striking difference is the scale of political mobilisation. From 1995, Zimbabwe saw what one activist described as a 'sort of revolution', with urban (and rural) protests increasing year after year. With each new wave of protest new

²⁶¹ A word of caution needs to be made. One tracer study in Tanzania examined graduate employment of engineers and showed an increase of appointments by the private sector in the 15 years to 1994, but that the state still employed 64 percent of graduates (Mkude *et al*, 2003).

layers of society would be galvanised, deepening the political movement that was tightening around the government. As Kagoro explains:

So you had the alienation of labour from a possibility of a settlement or accommodation with the government and then you moved from '95,'96, '97 and the rapidity with which the university privatised essentially meant that ... you no longer had student discontent you had an outright student rebellion on your hands. You had the most violent demonstrations during the '96,'97,'98 period (Interview, 23 June, 2003).

The crucial element during this period of student 'rebellion' was that they were not rebelling alone. While their activism displayed an important *avant-gardiste* (and elitist) role in the late 1980s - advancing the first serious critique of the regime - by the mid-1990s they were one part of a widening convergence of protest and resistance. By the late 1990s their action, while important, had become essentially subsidiary to the trade union movement. This observation can be extended to make a general point: as the level of mobilisation and unrest across society increases, the significance of student activism - now accountable to a wider movement - diminishes. Although students might have initiated the first daring protests or advanced the first scathing critique of the regime, they soon become one element of the general movement. The irony of successful student protest is, therefore, that it becomes less visible and less significant. This inevitably enfeebles student activism, as students have historically regarded their activism as being 'apart and above' society. So where students could no longer see their activism as deriving from the "feebleness of other social classes" (Cliff, 1963: 17), their visibility in the transitions declined. We can say, therefore, that the political agency of students varies according to the role and visibility of other social forces. Students in post-colonial Africa, as privileged actors, have continually played the role of a political *avant-garde*, however the political agency of students is greater in the early stages of popular mobilisation.

In many respects the experience in Senegal could not be more different. The period running up the presidential election in 2000 was not marked by urban protest and ferment. On the contrary, most of the political decisions - the formation of the *coalition alternance* - were made by a political elite, which, although drawn from the ranks of the opposition, was not directly accountable to a wider movement. The election victory was the result of a much longer process that had seen students protesting against World

Bank and IMF reforms throughout the 1990s. Although students played an important role in generating the groundswell of support for the transition, they were not operating in conditions of widespread political protest, let alone 'rebellion'. They did not, as a result, reach the dizzy heights of euphoria and political development experienced by activists in Zimbabwe (see Dahou and Foucher, 2004)

There are striking the differences between activists in the two countries. In Zimbabwe student activists talk about the euphoria of having been involved in massive social mobilisation. Often they conceptualise this activism in the general terms of liberation and revolution, terms that do not seem transplanted onto their activism, but a product of the scale of the protests that they have been involved in (see section 5:4:2 above). In Senegal, while students remember the excitement of the campaign, and the exquisite joy and hope that was generated by Wade's victory, they have a much weaker level of political analysis. Their horizons are fixed on more parochial concerns, having never been stretched by a wider movement.

Undoubtedly one of the reasons why the movement was weaker (yet in its narrower terms more successful) in Senegal, and why student activists are animated less by broader ideologies, is what Cherif Ba described as the failure of *la formation des militants*. It is important to repeat his argument (see section 6:4:6 above) that:

political parties must take responsibility for raising the political level of their activists. But what party does this? ... therefore activists don't get the basic training they must ... political involvement is simply engaged in ... to welcome the president (interview 12 February 2004).²⁶²

However, most of the political left, disorientated after the collapse of Stalinism, have immersed themselves in Wade's political circus. In this circus student activists are relegated to the status of cheerleaders, with no real responsibilities except as uncritical supporters of their political leaders.

In Zimbabwe there was a culture of political discussion and ideology that permeated the student movement from the early 1990s. Many of the leading activists – many of whom

²⁶² "assumer la formation de leurs militants. Quel est le parti politique qui fait ça? ... les militants n'ont pas la formation de base qu'il faut. ... on fait de la politique tout simplement ... pour aller accueillir un président."

are now MPs – credit the strength of their activism and political vision to their political ‘formation’ inside the International Socialist Organisation (ISO). Although a small organisation, it provided indispensable political debate and ideas to a significant layer of activists, providing them with theory (in the monthly newspaper *Socialist Worker* and the anti-privatisation pamphlets written and distributed on campuses) and in organisation, in the solidarity that was built between students and trade unionists in the late 1990s. Though the group was unable to sway events, it demonstrated the significance of the two most important and frequently missing elements to student activism – organisation and ideas.

This phenomenon is linked to an important theme in the thesis. If agents can act to bring about social change, they do so with the available organisational and ideological tools (see section 2:2 above). These resources fashioned by the student movement and conditioned by ‘inherited structures’ inform beliefs, loyalties and activism. However, as we have seen, these ideas do not act by themselves – independent of social context – and nor are they simply the reflection of this ‘context’ (Giddens, 1992). The case studies show us that ‘ideas’ and ‘organisations’ (or their absence) can have a vital influence on events.

7:4 Students, agency and political change

It is the argument of this thesis that students in Zimbabwe and Senegal – and more broadly in sub-Saharan Africa – are crucial agents of social change. Their historical status – described in chapter 3 – as politically privileged actors gives them an ability to shape political change, which is disproportionate to their numbers and distinct from their counterparts in developed capitalist countries. The thesis has explored the way students have exercised political agency, and the ways that opportunities for agency are shaped by historical and geographical circumstances.

However there are certain elements of this agency that need more careful reflection. The case studies in the thesis tell stories of students playing a part in overturning governments, creating opposition movements and achieving changes in national policy. But despite highly energetic student activism, both Zimbabwe and Senegal are resolutely pursuing neo-liberal agendas. Does this mean that students cannot exercise

meaningful agency in the face of global pressures? And does political agency require a coherent political philosophy? If so, to what extent are students able to achieve this, constrained as they are by highly structured circumstances?

What is meant specifically by the term ‘meaningful’? In one respect this is a highly misleading word, as the thesis is concerned with the political agency of university students, and regards them as politically privileged agents. Student agents in Senegal and Zimbabwe were in this respect both able to affect political transformation. However, the desire to stress the ‘meaningfulness’ of political agency emerges from the distinguishing features in the case studies. The impact of student agents on political and social change is highly variable. It could be argued, for example, that students in Senegal made more impact on the political and economic trajectory of the state after the official transition in 2000, by forcing the government to break with the World Bank (see section 6:4:5 above). Still, as discussed in chapter 4, after the second wave of democratic struggles new governments across the continent followed more or less obediently the advice of the IFIs. This common resumption of neo-liberalism stemmed from a common failure, which was linked to the inability of protest movements to develop independent organisational and ideological alternatives that could have offered a sufficient counter weight to the global momentum of neo-liberal forces (Gwisai, 2000b). This thesis argues, therefore, for the need to distinguish between the effectiveness of political agency, against the extreme relativism of much contemporary social theory (Manor, 1991). University students in Zimbabwe attempted to exercise meaningful agency, through a conception of social transformation that linked the democratic struggle outside the campus, principally in the trade union movement, with the struggle of students. They also made hesitant steps towards constructing organisational tools (e.g. Students Against Privatisation) that sought to question not only specific economic reforms but also the prevailing worldview of the local and global order.

We saw the dramatic contrast between the case studies, with an important layer of student activists (many who went on to lead the student movements and later become opposition politicians) in Zimbabwe, being trained by a political organisation with an explicitly socialist political philosophy. Many of the student activists themselves

acknowledge the role of the ISO, Brighton Makunike – chair of the MDC at the UZ in 2003 - for example is clear about the continuing role of the organisation:

What I like from ISO is their issue of *jambanja* [resistance], they don't beat about the bush trying to come up with some alternative, they always have the way forward at their disposal (Interviews, 27 May 2003).

It is important to emphasise the role of the organisation among a wide group of activists, who have had contact with the party as one-time members, sympathisers or simply fellow travellers. Among students, however, the organisation is not simply the forum for the political formation of militants. The example of the leading member of the ISO, Munyaradzi Gwisai deserves more than a passing mention. He was not only singled out by students as being one of the student movement's historical leaders, but as a consistent and intransigent opponent to the regime. His political identity is inextricably tied up with the organisation, and he is regarded as someone who can be trusted to train other activists: a principled activist rather than a political weather vane. Among students this has never meant uncritical support for a political hero, rather as Jethro Mpfu explained:

... to me there was something particularly striking about Munyaradzi Gwisai. I found him concerned about the poverty of the people, the interest of the students at the time. He was not absorbed by his position as a lecturer who earns a lot of money and who is comfortable but thinking and empathising with other people in a different social structure than his. I saw a missionary and revolutionary in such actions and I think he inspired me a lot. We differed in other issues but he inspired me by his selflessness (Interview, 23 May 2003).

This quotation expresses a typical aspect of student action, the importance of 'setting an example' as champions of the poor and underprivileged. It also reinforces the importance of meaningful agency and leadership. From the mid-1990s (and to a limited extent before this at the UZ) the ISO organised and trained through militants in 'cadre schools', meetings, newspapers, pamphlets and endless political discussions. This was not a hierarchical model of political organisation and leadership (Barker *et al*, 2001) rather one that endeavoured to lead, not principally through 'representing' people in existing political institutions, but by seeking the mobilisation of others. As Barker (2001: 42) argues, it is a model of organisation based on the desire "to win fellow-militants to a common framework of understanding and intervention. Far from

promoting passivity, they encourage activism; instead of neglecting education ... [it is] their very *métier*, their be-all-and-end-all.”

In this respect we have the answer to Cherif Ba’s scathing criticism of political parties in Senegal that simultaneously lambast the student movement for its ‘empty head’ but undertake no political formation of their own. These are not political accidents but aspects intrinsic to the character to these organisations. For the most part they are political bodies fixated on parliamentary and presidential elections, which require no fundamental alternative to pre-existing social relations and identities. Historically these organisations have been categorised as ‘reformist’ (Birchall, 1986). Michels wrote critically about how the German Social Democratic Party, the SPD, at the turn of the 20th century neglected political education:

Devoting all its energies to the imitation of the outward apparatus of power characteristic of the ‘class-state’, the socialist party allots no more than a secondary importance to psychological enfranchisement from the mentality, which dominates the same class-state (quoted in Barker, 2001: 35).

These political formations, Michels (1959) argued, confirmed his belief in the inherently ‘oligarchical tendencies of modern democracy.’²⁶³ In reality this conservatism and oligarchy are logical consequences, according to Barker, of their:

acceptance of the broad framework of capitalism. The state and its constitution and procedures, etc. Michels did not grasp this argument, for he did not distinguish between *forms of parties* (Barker, 2001: 35).

This concept of political organisation and leadership contrasts sharply with the one employed by the ISO in Zimbabwe, which emphasised self-activity and collective decision-making. This did not turn the organisation into a talking shop of endless debates but, by their own admission, decisions were “reached through the democratic process of the majority” and then acted on (Gwisai, 2002b: 24). The party’s stature rested not only on their pamphlets and debates but also on action, that is ‘generating facts’ (collecting for striking workers, organising demonstrations etc) (Lavalette, 2001: 134).

²⁶³ This is, in fact, the subtitle of his famous study *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*.

Even those activists, whose contact with the ISO was only slight, commented on the clarity of the organisation's political perspectives. ISO members were able to link specific questions and perspectives to more general issues of neo-liberalism and regional development. They were involved in a 'dialogical engagement' with the wider movement, a process of constant political debate and discussion with other movement militants; similar experiences are described in other contexts (Lavalette, 2001). Ultimately the ISO was unable to stop both the neo-liberal turn of the MDC (the MDC had consumed the student movement, see section 5:4:4 above) because, according to Gwisai (2002b: 27), "it lacked the necessary size and penetration ... to offer a sufficient counter weight to the might of local and international neo-liberal forces."

These issues relate directly to the theoretical concerns of the thesis. Although political agency exists in the absence of a 'coherent political philosophy' - students force themselves onto the national scene with a confused mixture of political ideas - 'political ideas' impact on their ability to exercise *meaningful* agency. In the period following the collapse of the Berlin Wall - that signalled the final death agony of state-led strategies for development - ideological confusion consumed many of the social forces that had looked to progressive and leftwing political change. Yet in much of the third world students remained important agents of the political transitions, frequently initiating wider social protests. However the collapse of state-led development and Stalinism, meant that the student-intelligentsia drew on a myriad of confused political and ideological ideas, which gave them a decidedly hybrid identity. They were often at once Guevarists and Islamists, drawing on a peculiar mixture of Islamist teachings from Pakistan or Sudan fused with ideas classically associated with third world revolutionaries. Often this student-intelligentsia acted out of despair, as Derluguian (1999: 18) writes about the student-intelligentsia in Chechnya "they have neither the resources nor a real programme of socio-economic reform."

However, we can say that students exercise real political agency even in the absence of a coherent programme for socio-economic change, yet the inherited circumstances or structures curtail their ability to exercise *meaningful* 'agency'. The political transitions in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s occurred in a world fundamentally altered by global geopolitics. The struggles of students in periphery capitalist societies have been

profoundly affected by the collapse of ideas of national liberation linked to state-led development (Harris, 1987). What Derluguian (1999: 19) writes about the Northern Caucasus could apply equally to the students in this study, “an increasingly desperate search for a renegotiated identity and a dignified position within the reconfigured world-system.” Countries such as Senegal and Zimbabwe were seemingly faced “with the impossible choice between the competitive discipline of global markets and the prospect of total marginalisation” (Derluguian, 1999: 19). These ideas are examined in more detail in the final chapter.

The collapse of vibrant protest movements into a familiar pattern (see chapter 4) of neo-liberal reforms reflects a failure of the protests and rebellions that are described in this thesis. Students themselves are clear about their failure to organise ideologically in higher education. As we have seen in Zimbabwe, Hopewell Gumbo explained that during the formation of the MDC students had no clear strategy to enter the movement to influence the new party, and maintain their independence from it: “Our participation was then limited from being an ideological engine to being foot-soldiers in the emergent party” (Interview 28 July 2003). These weaknesses in student agency are identifiable historically. In the war for national liberation in Zimbabwe, again as we have seen (see section 5:3:3 above) student activists failed to “undertake an analysis of the conditions under which uprisings occur” (Cefkin, 1975: 157-8). These problems typically derive from the same source: Firstly, the failure of the student movement to distinguish themselves clearly and independently from the political weaknesses of wider political forces. Secondly, the absence of an effective organisation that exists and organises in broad a political and social milieu (in townships, factories and universities). In the presence of such organisations students may indeed be able to ‘touch off’ wider revolutionary actions that could lead to lasting political transitions, without such political leadership and organisation “the student initiative remained an isolated event of little impact within the African community” (Cefkin, 1975: 158).

These issues are connected to the theoretical discussion in chapters 2 and 3, but they need further elucidation here. Harman, in an important essay (2004: 80) stresses the centrality of political and ideological structures in the historical process. As he writes, “Economic development never took place on its own, in a vacuum. It was carried forward by human beings, living in certain societies whose political and ideological

structures had an impact on their actions.” In turn, these structures were the products of a confrontation between social groups.

As we have seen social and ideological structures are not wholly determined by economic development; rather it is the contradictions that exist between the economic base and the political superstructure that frequently determine this development. Development is also propelled by ideological and political conflict between rival social groups, and not simply economics. The resolution of these conflicts “is never resolved in advance, but depends upon initiative, organisation and leadership” (Harman, 2004: 80). ‘Initiative, organisation and leadership’ – partly Michels’ ‘psychological enfranchisement’ - are the raw material through which human beings are able to make history, but not on a level playing field (or in a vacuum). We do not choose the circumstances in which these struggles take place.²⁶⁴

Historical progress proceeds under such contradictions. Amin (1990) argued that it was the economic backwardness of Western Europe that gave it an advantage in the development of capitalism. Other Eurasia African societies had experienced similar developments in production, but these were ultimately suffocated by existing states structures. The Chinese Empire – the most economically advanced in the ‘Middle Ages’ – was able to block these developments while in the least advanced areas of Western Europe the social forces unleashed by these changes could break down the old superstructures.²⁶⁵ But the capacity to ‘break down’ old institutions was not simply a matter of economics, but crucially of politics and ideology (the ‘ideological tools’ of the thesis). It was not only a question of struggling against the economic control by old social groups but also the prevailing worldview. Where the social forces associated to the new forms of production were unsuccessful, or too closely connected to the old states and institutions, “they were defeated and the old orders hung on for a few more centuries until the battleship and cheap goods of Europe’s capitalists brought it tumbling down” (Harman, 2004:81).

²⁶⁴ Otherwise we would all, presumably, *choose* much more favourable circumstances!

²⁶⁵ This, of course, implies a further importance to the struggles in periphery capitalist societies. As relatively ‘weak’ links in the global hierarchy, it is perhaps in these areas that the chains of capitalist society can be the first to be prised apart. These are familiar ideas for many Marxists (Trotsky, 1992).

7:5 Reflecting on the 'voices' of students

One of the most dramatic observations that can be made about the activism of the students in this thesis is the near invisibility of women. Among more than 80 leading student activists interviewed over 5 years, only a handful have been female. One of the rare female activists who held office in the otherwise male-dominated SRC at the UZ was *Commercie Mucheni*. She explains the significance of her election, and the difficulties for women on campus (September 1997 to March 1998):

I made history to become the first female student secretary general. A lot of people questioned if I could handle the position... they didn't know that a woman could actually come out in the open and say, "I am taking a leading role.".. At the time you would hear guys shouting to female students, "why bring those big breasts on campus, do you want to breast feed everyone here?" You would see such kind of verbal threats, verbal abuse towards women ... it was oppressive and as a consequence female students often could not enjoy life on campus. Physical abuse also occurred. They could strip naked women seen wearing mini skirts or what they would describe as indecent clothing (Interview 6 June 2003).

The lack of leading female activists did not exclude their activism at other levels of the university, although the student demonstration in both case studies was a largely male activity. At the UZ there are repeated appeals for the unity of UBAs (the nickname for male students – the University Bachelors' Association) and USAs (the University Spinsters' Association), although in recent years the relationship between the sexes has been strained by attacks on female students (Choto, 2002: 167). Even the terms UBA and USA have come to represent a largely masculine frustration at the inability to have relationships with university women. Because of the paralysing poverty on campus, there is the perception that only NABs (Non-Academic Bachelors - the term used to describe male professionals outside the university) have access to university women, being in a position to take them out. The question of gender and political activism in Africa has received some important recent attention (Oyewumi, 2005).

However the more general question of the role of the student voice in the thesis needs more analysis. It is in relation to the ideological motivations of activism, and the significance of a reflective understanding of student action, that we must situate the argument for listening to student voices.

As discussed in chapter 2, the thesis seeks to uncover the agency of students, responding to and reforming the structures that they directly encounter. The focus on individual student activists allows us to strike at both agency and structure, interrogating the motivations for their political activism. Their ‘voices’ also act as important historical witnesses to the movements that they have been a part, and they, therefore, fulfill a further concern of the thesis to uncover the ‘hidden history’ of the transitions.

Yet more needs to be said about student voices. There is a strikingly obvious reason to focus on their voices, which occurs to anyone (but perhaps more to activists) who has had contact with student leaders and militants. A large part of their activity revolves around their ‘voices’, and what they spend most of their time doing: ‘talking’. This obvious, though vital, observation is made superbly by Mische (2001: 140) writing about Brazilian youth leaders:

They talk about the problems with the existing society as well as the nature and shape of the alternative society that they believe they are working for; they debate issues of tactics and strategy; they plan events, negotiate logistics, and distribute responsibilities. And somewhere in there, either foregrounded in official movement settings or backgrounded to informal bar, car, or (sometimes) bed talk, they talk about personal experiences, what the movement ‘means’ to them, and what they hope to take out of it for their own still uncertain life futures.

These arguments connect to ones already made (see section 2:6 above). The ideological motivation – the ‘ideological tools’ - of action are key to meaningful student agency, and social change generally. Therefore a careful interrogation of their voices elicits a deeper understanding of the components that help to make social change possible: initiative, organisation and leadership.

However an emphasis on their ‘voices’ is not unproblematic. It is important to reiterate some of the caution that was expressed in chapter 2. Students, more than other political actors, have a tendency to represent themselves as vital political agents. This is particularly true for a social group that has long regarded itself as the ‘voice of the voiceless’, seeing its activism and status through an elitist prism. We saw that those activists involved in protests - that have either swept away incumbent regimes or shaken them to the core - display a further desire to exaggerate their agency. Therefore ‘voices’

are rarely enough, and act at best as partial witnesses to the events that they describe. It is for this reason that the thesis has sought to combine the ‘voices’ of the student agent – the subjective accounts of political change – with broader historical and geographical circumstances. The ‘voice’ needs to be embedded in its inherited structure, and also interrogated by a research methodology that does not leave oral testimony unverified: a methodology that cross-examines these ‘voices’ with each other, but also with additional sources of historical and geographical enquiry.

7:6 Negotiating the democratic transition

Much academic literature has questioned the extent of the democratic transitions that have taken place across Africa, casting doubt on the depth of the transition and the extension of democracy. Although John Saul has become far less critical of the protest movements in recent years (2003), he still highlights some of the genuine weaknesses of the movements. There are serious and important problems, not so much of the waves of democratic struggle but the limitations of ‘democratic’ advance in conditions of ‘structural adjustment’. Perhaps Abrahamsen (2000) is the most penetrating critic of the shallow calls for ‘good governance’ by the international community. She rightly identifies how popular resistance, frequently against the policies of the IMF and World Bank, dovetailed with the demands of the international community for greater ‘democratic openness’ (and a greater drive towards neo-liberalism). This is, perhaps, one of the central paradoxes of the period since the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Most of the international community does not fear popular mobilisation and protest in the same way. Indeed they have come to regard it as a useful method to remove certain particularly corrupt or ‘intransigent’ governments that have failed to successfully implement programmes of structural adjustment. As Callinicos has explained, “The method of velvet revolution has become a technique of imperial rule - more effective, arguably, than the US Marines - through which American funds and émigré expertise are deployed behind the local politicians most likely to set up a pro-Western regime” (Callinicos, 2004). This should not be interpreted as an argument that sees all protest movements manipulated by American power, but an appeal for the careful analysis of the forces behind national political change. However the reality is that in sub-Saharan Africa, during the 1980s and 1990s, as economic reforms continued, so too did popular protests. The two transitions in this study, frustrated in Zimbabwe and ‘successful’ in

Senegal, were part of these waves of change, but also subject to the same enormous contradictions.

In the post-Stalinist world the struggles that have erupted as consequences of neo-liberal reforms and structural adjustment have often taken on the appearance of movements for democracy and human rights (and even further liberalisation). This is frequently due to the fact that governments implementing these reforms rely on increasingly draconian measures to suppress popular discontent. Harman (2004: 21) describes these processes well:

The path that began with neo-liberalism ends up in quasi-dictatorship ... the effect is to turn social and economic issues into political struggles around demands for democracy and human rights. In the process people can lose sight of the social and economic roots of these political issues.

This can mean that the regime attacks old allies, who had advocated the same policies of neo-liberalism.

In Zimbabwe it was these 'old allies' who forced themselves to the front of the opposition movement, seeing in it the possibility of uprooting Mugabe who was now seen as a block to further liberalisation. Harman explains that:

Mugabe turned to repression after strikes and violent street protests by workers against the price rises resulting from neo-liberal policies. But ... white landowning interests that fell out with Mugabe have been able to persuade the main opposition party to align with them, despite the trade union origins and the working class base of the party (2004:21).

The dynamic of protest and change was very different in Senegal, though the same contradictory situation prevailed. The movement for *sopi* had its roots in anti-neo-liberal protests of the late 1980s and 1990s, and specifically the World Bank and IMF reforms that the regime had been implementing since the 1980s. In the course of the 1990s it came to be epitomised by a party (and leader) who identified further liberalisation and structural adjustment as the solution to Senegal's woes. Similarly the desire for widespread economic and social transformation became a movement, led by an opposition elite from above, for democratisation and citizenship. In both cases the cycle of neo-liberalism resumed: in Zimbabwe when Mugabe dropped his populist pro-poor

price freezes and in Senegal the day after Wade's election. However a note of caution needs to be sounded: as we have seen Wade's reforms of higher education necessitated the government breaking with the World Bank, yet these were changes forced on the government by the murder of Balla Gaye (see section 6:4:4 above). As argued above, this implies that students do, in certain circumstances, have sufficient political agency to negate the will of the World Bank.

The effect on student activists was devastating. In Zimbabwe they saw their unions and political hope expire, as the government recovered momentum and the MDC resorted to courting the international community by promising to return the country to neo-liberalism and seized land to its 'rightful' owners. Student activists were politically disarmed, and were used increasingly for set-piece confrontations with the regime. In Senegal the new government, which had promised heaven and earth to university students, only granted reforms after the student strike in 2001, and then proceeded to co-opt and corrupt leading student activists (a process that did not pose too many difficulties for the government). Student activism had been softened up by the hammer blows of neo-liberalism, and though students maintain a privileged political role they have seen their activism transformed. Their capacity to act independently has been drastically undermined by the twin pressures of poverty and the 'commodification of resistance'.

7:7 Student activism and the 'commodification of resistance'

Student activism has been dramatically affected by what has been called the 'donor syndrome'. The effect of structural adjustment, enfeebling national government (Abrahamsen, 2000), has led to a plethora of NGOs that have emerged in the last twenty years. Some of the literature distinguishes between different types of NGO, Klein argues in *No Logo* (1999) that NGOs were part of the 'swarm' that was going to paralyse multinationals, while Bond (2001: 201-2) makes a distinction between co-opted and non-co-opted NGOs, regarded as important allies of popular struggles. The great majority of NGOs, however, have in many countries assumed traditional state functions. Foley of the Norwegian Refugee Council explains that they "have assumed responsibility for state-type functions such as the provision of public services, health and education" (quoted in Harman 2004: 21). The growth of NGOs – from 145,000

worldwide in 1990 to more than 250,000 in 2000 – has increasingly directed the distribution of foreign aid (Ungpakorn, 2004: 49). These NGOs have stepped in to fill the gaps created by the impact of structural adjustment and neo-liberalism on basic social services, often using the language of ‘empowerment’ and ‘community participation’.

It is among Bond’s NGO ‘allies’ that problems for many activists start. The term ‘commodification of resistance’ has been used by the ISO describes how resistance is being ‘commodified’ by NGOs in Zimbabwe, yet it is a feature of many sub-Saharan African countries. In Zimbabwe the commodification of resistance is a symptom of the frustrated transition, and the decline in the movement that gave birth to the MDC. The general effect is the massive distortion of social resistance by the introduction of the ‘donor syndrome’, the distribution of donor money to activist groups and NGOs. The result for the student movement in Zimbabwe was the ‘artificial’ creation of the *Zimbabwe Youth Democracy Trust* in 2003 by ex-members of the executive of the national student union, ZINASU (the *Student Solidarity Fund* is another example). The money for the ‘Trust’ was provided by a Norwegian NGO and student activists were diverted into fighting over positions in the Trust and for control of the organisation. Donor money has also flowed into the ZINASU as the union is incapable of funding its own activities through student subscriptions.

Some writers have seen the connection between NGOs and neo-liberalism as proof of their collaboration with ‘imperialism’; indeed, this is an argument used by ZANU-PF to justify the recent legislation constraining the activism of Zimbabwean based NGOs. James Petras (1999: 431) argues that the funding of NGOs by western governments exposes their so-called ‘apolitical’ approach, revealing them as ‘grass roots reactionaries’. They act, according to Petras, as an emergency service disorientating discontent to ensure that capital accumulation can continue unabated. There is, undoubtedly, an historical case for these assertions. For example, one of the principal NGOs in Zimbabwe is the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation, linked to the German SPD, which operated across Africa during the Cold War, sought to undermine the ‘influence’ of communism in trade unions (Gwisai, 2002b).

Increasingly NGOs do not reinforce ‘grassroots’ initiatives but create a climate of dependency. Activists are not obliged to “find their own resources for struggle, and union meetings and seminars are held in the comfort of expensive hotels” (Ungpakorn 2004: 58). This stems from a profound failure to understand the momentum of activism (and not always an explicit desire to work as an ‘agent of imperialism’). Rather than seek the solution to political change and agitation in the self-organisation of activist groups and organisations, NGOs divert these energies to the scramble for funds. The case of Thailand applies equally to Zimbabwe (and Senegal): Ungpakorn (2004: 58) explains that here NGOs “look to foreign networks and the internet for help. This can be seen by the way they teach striking workers to chant slogans and write placards in English – a language which most Thai trade unionists do not understand.”

These distortions have had a similar effect in Senegal. Although the principal conduit of the ‘commodification of resistance’ has been through funds made available to student activists by political parties, the result is the same. The capacity for students to resist such ‘co-option’ has been severely eroded by the ubiquitous poverty on campus. Harman writes that these NGOs “have money which other grassroots activists lack, getting it from foundations run by western multinationals or from governmental bodies. This means they can go into an area from the outside and offer local people the finance and resources they need to advance their campaign” (2004: 21). However these are not grass-roots initiatives, but ones that have clear limits prescribed by the donors. They distort local activism by sucking in militants who become cut off from the struggles that they were involved in generating. The pull of donor money in conditions of widespread poverty is hard to resist, and activists are now drawn into a spider’s web of regional conferences, national meetings, organising committees, training days and interminable public meetings – or *diner-débat* at UCAD in Dakar.

The ‘commodification of resistance’ is linked to a twin phenomena: the neo-liberal pauperisation of sub-Saharan Africa and the political collapse of the left in the 1980s and 1990s. “Disillusionment especially after the disintegration of the Eastern bloc, led many of its members to retreat from any idea of total confrontation with the world system and turn to single issue campaigns” (Harman 2004: 21). This explains the proclivity of single-issue campaigns among NGO activists, who see new possibilities of ‘empowering’ communities through donor funds. In these contexts it is not the co-opted

NGOs of Bond's dichotomy that pose the real threat but his non-co-opted allies who are able to ingratiate themselves in movements and campaigns. Bomba's seemingly harsh treatment of these allies (discussed in chapter 5) now seems a reasoned critique, they "disarmed the movement that was emerging from the ground, [and] shifted people's focus from the real battles to some very fantastical arenas" (Interview 23 May 2003).

7:8 Conclusion

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of contemporary student activism in much of sub-Saharan Africa is not so much its distortions and transformation, but that under often crippling poverty students were able to make an important contribution to the political transitions on the continent. They have tenaciously clung to their status of privileged political actors, occasionally using an elitist discourse to make sense of their activism. Their status as politically privileged actors gives them a political agency that is unavailable to others. This is still linked, as it was in the years immediately after independence, to both their organizational coherence (living in a reified or 'hyper-politicised' university space) and the relative organisational weaknesses of other social groups in society. However student activism has followed the political and economic trajectory of the continent, from their role as a student-intelligentsia in national liberation movements to articulating the first systematic critiques of the new nations and then, as their privileged access to the state was shut down, they helped to galvanise the convergence of forces during the democratic transitions. The transitions in Zimbabwe and Senegal betrayed the hopes of countless activists, but reminds us of the centrality of political organisation and ideology to combat the cacophony of cries that there are no alternatives to austerity, neo-liberalism and Wade's "you must work, again work and always work."²⁶⁶

These conclusions are linked explicitly to the theoretical concerns of the thesis. It is clear that the importance of 'activism' is not simply as a topic of research, but an important element in social and economic development. Economic development without the intervention of ideological and social struggle (political activism) can lead to stagnation or worse "the common ruin of struggling classes" (Marx and Engels 1964:

²⁶⁶ "il faut travailler, encore travailler, toujours travailler."

58) Therefore to make and remake historical-geography requires a social group with “... its own ideas, its own organisation and eventually its own ... leadership. Where its most determined elements managed to create such things, the new society took root. Where it failed ... stagnation and decay were the result” (Harman, 2004: 82). The inability of students to consider the ‘impossibility’ of social change ²⁶⁷ ensures the continued necessity and vibrancy of their agency, as an important element in the organisations that will seek a ‘transition’ to a world not dominated by neo-liberalism, austerity and underdevelopment.

The conclusion considers the contemporary ‘student intelligentsia’ that was introduced in chapter 3, describing how this group, deflected from its post-independence trajectory and cast adrift by globalisation, has responded through a variety of movements and organisations. The conclusion will also return to the idea of waves of protests, and consider the evidence that a ‘third wave’ linked to the international anti-capitalist movement is emerging on the continent.

²⁶⁷ Or as Malcolm X (1992: 18) wrote forty years ago: “The students didn’t think in terms of the odds against them, and they couldn’t be bought out.” Malcolm X was one of the sharpest social critics (and activists) of the 1960s, he was also aware of the weaknesses of student activism in the USA. He wrote that American students “have been noted for involving themselves in panty raids, goldfish swallowing ... not for their revolutionary political ideas or their desire to change unjust conditions. But some students are becoming more like their brothers around the world” (X, 1992: 18-19).

Chapter 8

Conclusion: The return of the student-intelligentsia?

8:1 Introduction

This chapter intentionally broadens out the conclusions of the thesis, and the ideas discussed are preliminary, hence provisional and indeed incomplete. It is simply meant to illustrate some of the important areas that deserve further careful analysis. The thesis has charted the evolution of university students – and considered their uneasy membership of the intelligentsia – that informs much of their activism. Former student activists in Zimbabwe described themselves in the 1980s – as they started to formulate the first critique of the ruling party – as ‘revolutionary intellectuals’; one way of understanding this self-identity is in relation to a historically derived status as politically privileged actors. However, in the context of the austerity and adjustment on the continent, do students maintain this position? Has student activism become fragmented and less influential with the privatisation and diversification of higher education? This tension divides much of the literature (see Frederici, 2000; Mario *et al*, 2003). The contemporary activism of students takes place in a highly structured world where students frequently no longer view themselves as a privileged elite but struggle to survive at the university and secure a future in an uncertain post-university job-market (Mills, 2004: 671). Still, students have repeatedly demonstrated a capacity to ‘touch off’ (Cefkin, 1975: 158) wider social protests during the transitions.

The thesis regards the neo-liberal project of the corporate university and higher education reform in Africa, and the struggle of students against it, as a global one. But in Africa, in the midst of a deep-seated economic crisis, these reforms take on a more violent aspect. It is argued that there was a ‘glory period’ in continental higher education, but that it was extinguished not long after independence. Soon Africa became the guinea pig for the project of market-led rationalisation of higher education. This thesis has reflected specifically on the peculiarities of the African experience, and this experience, I have argued, is connected to the evolution of the student-intelligentsia,

which has responded to the crisis on the continent in diverse ways. This chapter briefly looks at some of these responses. While the student-intelligentsia often triggered a 'democratic revival' linked to the convergence of social forces in the democratic transitions, its members have also been among the leaders of secessionist and rebel movements on the continent (Richards, 1996; Foucher, 2002).

The reforms that have impoverished the continent, and pulverised higher education, have not gone unanswered. But the ideological response of the opposition through the transitions was muted, disorientated by the collapse of Stalinism. Activists across the continent were left believing that there was no genuine alternative. The triumph of neo-liberalism, and Bush senior's 'new world order', was seemingly without response. Student agency was enfeebled at exactly the time when a radical ideological alternative was needed. The euphoria of the 'end of history' profoundly affected individuals. I was finding my political feet during the short-lived triumph of capitalism in the early 1990s. I remember a family holiday in 1991, when a right-wing uncle scoffed at a copy of the *Communist Manifesto* I was studying. "Leo, capitalism has vanquished its foes, there is nothing more to fight for." I was stunned, but my riposte was not as fierce or as quick as it would be today. Today the scoffing belongs to the activist. The language (and organisations) of social transformation, prematurely buried in the fall of Soviet communism, is returning. This crucial element in the capacity of students in this study to exercise meaningful political agency is, to a certain extent, answered in the rise of global resistance (Amoore, 2005). Those seeking to build on the movements described in the thesis must draw on this resistance. This chapter considers briefly the 'third wave' of protest, and the impact that it has had on activists on the continent.

8:2 'The student-intelligentsia'

As we saw in chapter three, university students, graduates and foreign educated and organised students were able to play an important – some argue vital – role leading movements for national liberation in the 1940s and 1950s. They were frequently organised in exiled student groups, and fraternised closely with a left wing and communist milieu that converged and fed into their anti-imperialism. When this student intelligentsia returned, often after years overseas, they helped set up, lead and organise the nationalist forces that were gathering momentum. Their status as a student

intelligentsia ensured that they could gain authority over movements that had very different social roots. They occupied a unique position between two social worlds, one represented by the West and symbolising modernisation and development, and another world that they had escaped in Africa. They rejected the latter and believed that independence would herald rapid state-led development of their backward societies and confirm their historical role in bringing this development to fruition. In many ways this explicit elitism – that was derived from their unique organisational and political coherence in colonial Africa – was the mantle handed to post-independence students (Mamdani, 1994).

There is an important element of this ‘elitism’ that continues to generate student activism. Students still regard themselves as being privileged in terms of their proximity to a European world – a world of technology, development and globalisation. It is this contradiction – a heady mix of poverty and elitism – that motivated student activists in Senegal and Zimbabwe during their recent political transitions. As Mor Faye brilliantly described: “[i]t is us [students] who have learnt ... at the university. It is us who have learnt what a computer is. Our parents understand that we know things that they don’t understand.”²⁶⁸ Their parents represent an old world, “an African culture, whereas we have a European culture that we have learnt. If we go to them they will accept it” (Interview, 5 February 2004).²⁶⁹ University students in sub-Saharan Africa – despite the almost total collapse of their material conditions from the heyday of the 1970s – have maintained a politically privileged position in society.

But there are other perhaps more dramatic examples of the continued importance of this group in contemporary Africa. One of the secrets of the student intelligentsia was their capacity to organise in national and international student unions and politically through access to a conceptual and intellectual world denied to most sections of society. The student milieu generated conditions that were at once internationalist – giving them access to international organisations and funds – while pulling students into ‘hyper-politicised’ spaces, in college and university campuses (see section 4:5 above).

²⁶⁸ “C’est nous [les étudiants] qui avons appris ... à l’université. C’est nous qui avons compris c’est quoi l’ordinateur. Nos parents là aussi par modestie savent que nous savons quelque chose qu’ils ne comprennent pas.”

²⁶⁹ “une culture africaine, [et nous] une culture qui nous vienne de l’Europe qu’on nous a apprise. Nous qui l’avons apprise, si on vient ils vont l’accepter.”

Organisations could flourish without the rigid discipline of the workplace or the state-controlled streets. During the last twenty years the student intelligentsia has been propelled into new roles, under very different circumstances. Although they are no longer advocates of state capitalist development – that was an allusive goal long before the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe (Saul, 2001) – they have become new political actors in diverse movements and groups across the continent.

During this period there has been an unprecedented transformation in Africa's political economy, often connected to the policies of structural adjustment which has seen state industries and businesses collapse. These changes have often exacerbated processes of state decline leading in some cases to total collapse (Zack-Williams *et al*, 2002). In these conditions often the only group that is able to maintain a degree of cohesion is that of university students. The transition is often rapid, from participating in democratic struggles in civil society, a student intelligentsia is able to organise and lead rebel movements that follow (and help precipitate) state collapse (Maier, 2000: 227-249).

The cases of Liberia and Sierra Leone are revealing. Richards (1996) describes an alienated intelligentsia composed of ex-students who made up Sierra Leone's rebel armies. One fighter explained: "Most of the rebels are students, the majority are students. They write on paper that they drop. After an attack they write a message and drop it. These are the reasons they are fighting they say. The government doesn't give any encouragement to people to get land or to go to school" (quoted in Richards, 2002: 36). In Liberia the same processes have taken place. The wave of resistance to Samuel Doe's brutal and corrupt regime saw students act as the *de facto* opposition from 1980 to 1984, when all opposition parties were banned. Students helped to organise Firestone workers but their leaders, together with trade unionists, were viciously repressed. Many spent years on death row. With the collapse in the rubber market in 1985 and the end of the Cold War, Liberia had lost its strategic importance. The economy was destroyed, and the US – which had been the country's chief backer – could ignore the war that descended on the state. A war was now fought for control of the country. The war did not represent the 'primitive' or 'barbaric' nature of societies in West Africa (as many commentators would have it, Kaplan, 1994). On the contrary, it demonstrated how "the

region was connected to a globalised economy that was at the same time criminal and informal” (see Zeilig, 2003).²⁷⁰

However, behind the war and the rebel groups was a student intelligentsia that had been active in the anti-Doe opposition in the early 1980s. The Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) were a rebel group that fought Charles Taylor’s government after elections brought him to power in 1997. They had been a faction in Taylor’s original war against Doe. The majority of the rebel leaders were also former student activists who had been involved in the resistance to Doe in the 1980s (Interview, Ezekiel Pajibo, 28 August 2003).

The student intelligentsia has played numerous roles during the period of state decline and collapse. Perhaps most notably, university students have been active in the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism. They have been key to the Islamic movements that are now demonised around the world, partly as a result of the collapse in graduate employment and the erosion of the same certainties that undermined the status of students in sub-Saharan Africa. Harman (1994: 9-10) explains that Islamism has arisen in “societies traumatised by the impact of capitalism” but it is the crisis in the world economy in the last 30 years that has seen a rapid increase in these ideas. Harman emphasises that it was frequently students who formed the backbone of Islamist movements:

Students, the recent Arab speaking graduates and above all, the unemployed ex-students who formed a bridge to the very large numbers of discontented youth outside colleges who find that they cannot get college places ... And through its influence over a wide layer of students, graduates and the intellectual unemployed, Islamism is able to spread out to dominate the propagation of ideas in the slums and shanty towns as a ‘conservative’ movement (Harman, 1994: 16-17).

It was the control and domination of Islamic ideas on the campuses of Algeria in the 1980s and 1990s that ensured that the Islamists were able to step into the “impoverished streets of the cities where students and ex-students mixed with a mass of other people scabbling for a livelihood” (Harman, 1994: 19). The convergence of forces – between

²⁷⁰ For example, ‘blood’ diamonds were sold by international traders in London and Antwerp.

an impoverished student and ex-student body and the 'mass of other people' – has manifested itself in a multiplicity of movements.

Similarly, the 11 September attack on New York was carried out by student suicide bombers. The leading figure in the attack is illustrative of these trends. Mohammad Atta was born in Kafr el-Sheikh in the Nile Delta, in what one report described as the "slightly down at heel Cairo suburb of Giza" (*The Observer*, 2001). His family came from a branch of the intelligentsia that was angry at the opening out to the West by Anwar Sadat in the late 1970s. Atta graduated from a university that had become, by the early 1990s, a ferment of fundamentalist activity. He joined the Engineers Syndicate, one of a few professional associations in Egypt controlled by the Muslim Brotherhoods. He became appalled by the creation of what he regarded as a new class of Egyptian 'fat cats.' Volker Hauth, who studied with him in Germany, remembers "One of the main points of his critique was the contrast between a few rich people and the mass of people with barely enough to survive" (*The Observer*, 2001).²⁷¹

Mohammed Atta is portentous of the movements for Islamic revival, inspired by the desire to reverse real injustices that have emerged violently across the third world in the last thirty years. A student intelligentsia has played a pivotal role in these movements, as the ideological champions of Islamic reforms and of rebel movements during state collapse.²⁷² In each case they act as disgruntled victims of the economic and political disintegration going on around them. While students in the Muslim association of Senegalese students, AMEAN, in the 1950s could envisage a radical Islam, and a 'revivalism' that was linked to a progressive agenda for radical social change, today the collapse of this agenda has transformed student activists. As Diouf (2002: 160) has written, these students, rather than being the agents of progressive social transformation, see themselves as the custodians of tradition: "Certain sections of youth assign themselves the role of guardians of a Muslim morality which justifies punitive expeditions against drugs, drunkenness and thieves."

²⁷¹ These conclusions were substantiated in a recent study looking at the rates of education among 'terrorists', which found that "having a higher standard of living above the poverty line or a secondary-school education or higher is positively associated with participation [in terrorist groups]" (Krueger and Maleckova, 2002: 5).

²⁷² Alhaji Dokubo-Asari is a member of the alienated student intelligentsia in Nigeria, where he leads a group trying to wrestle the oil-rich Niger Delta from multinational oil companies and the government (see Maier 2000: 227-49).

In general, Senegalese students have not assumed the ideological mantle of religious change that has characterised North African and Middle Eastern universities, nor have they spearheaded a Senegalese version of the Islamic revival. They have however played a crucial role in the separatist movement in the Casamance (see Foucher, 2002b). Out of the economic crisis that has gripped the country, religious associations have grown substantially. Today there are many active Islamic groups. The country is full of Islamic schools, teaching Arabic, in wealthier suburbs and in poor neighbourhoods, in makeshift wooden huts and any improvised spaces. At the university a number of associations claim to instil the pure tradition of the Prophet Mohammed.²⁷³ However, what is striking about the associations that are active on the campus is their relative invisibility in the political life of the university. In the 2001 student strike at the university, AEEMS was noticeable only for its passivity.²⁷⁴ What connects most university students across the continent is their economic trajectory; as promises to students were shattered in the economic crisis, they were left without a secular or progressive agenda.

After the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, a generation of intellectuals and leaders lost their ideological hold on the world. This has left its mark on social movements across the world. Although much recent student activism on the continent is notable for the lack of political debate, the celebrated ‘vanguardism’ of the 1970s (or the 1980s in the case of Zimbabwe) was a consequence of the collision of forces that are not present today. This does not preclude the development of these politics today.

8:3 A third wave? Protest in the 21st century

Considering that this thesis is concerned with the transitions that took place in two countries at the end of the 1990s and early part of this century, it is essential that we

²⁷³ The three largest of these associations at the university are the *Association des Elèves et Etudiants Musulmans du Sénégal* (AEEMS) and the *Association des Etudiants Musulmans de l'Université de Dakar* (AMEUD). Another was established in September 2001, the *Mouvement des Elèves et Etudiants de la Jamaatou Ibadou Rahmane* (MEEJIR). This structure is attached to a non-student group, the *Jamaatou Ibadou Rahmane*, the worshippers of God. The largest and most active of these groups, AEEMS, has almost a thousand members and it is well represented at the university and in many schools and colleges in Senegal.

²⁷⁴ Interviews with Muslim activist at the university in May 2001; and also Oumy Ndour January 2001.

return to the notion of waves of protests discussed in the first chapters. Is a third wave of protest emerging on the continent? It is argued that the antecedents of the anti-capitalist movement have their roots in waves of protests across the world, associated with the restructuring of the world economy, in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, but the rise of global dissent in terms of an explicit 'anti-capitalism' is a much a more recent phenomenon. For the first time popular protest and dissent is not merely national and international (in the sense of occurring in many places simultaneously across the world) but trans-national and potentially global. As the process of globalisation continues to break down and break apart the flimsy structures of national capitalism in favour of global capital and its agents and parasites, the popular forces encountered earlier have resisted this process. This process has been formulated by Alexander (2005) as entering a 'post post-modern' world.

Popular protest against illegitimate and undemocratic regimes, and against anti-social policies, continues to take place. There are still 'bread riots', and forms of protest reminiscent of the 'first wave' (of the 1970s and 1980s) continue to erupt; there is still unfinished business as regards the replacement of illegitimate regimes in many countries, and the establishment of new and more broadly representative governments is still likely to be the immediate objective of most popular movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America, as it was in the 'second wave' of the 1990s. But finally, there is now emerging a variety of movements and groupings which are explicitly – ideologically, politically – linked to similar movements of protest elsewhere in the world, and which draw strength and vitality from those international links to form the beginnings of a truly global movement of dissent against the dominant form of global capitalism – specifically US and more generally 'Western' imperialism (see Bircham and Charlton, 2000; Callinicos, 2003).

Perhaps the most profound developments in political protest on the continent are taking place in South Africa. Although limited in scale, over the last few years a new generation has emerged in the struggle against the government's essentially neo-liberal agenda. Frequently this has taken the form of community-based protest movements. In Johannesburg, relatively disparate 'actions' have fallen under the organising umbrella of the Anti-Privatisation Forum. Most notable of these is the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC) that has campaigned successfully against disconnections by the

electricity supplier Eskom, that were occurring at a rate of 20,000 per month in Soweto in 2001 (Ngwane, 2003). Action includes marches, meetings and sit-ins as well as the 'illegal' reconnection of electricity by militants of the SECC. The Anti-Eviction Campaign in Cape Town tells a similar story. Activists have fought against evictions by forcibly 'reoccupying' the homes of evicted families, after they were 'right-sized' into smaller dwellings. Older organisations that were created during the anti-apartheid struggle have been co-opted by the state. Perhaps one of the most famous of these was the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) that has, in the words of Trevor Ngwane (2003: 7), "been turned into a lapdog of the ANC government."

A new generation of activists and militants has emerged, together with these 'new social movements', many of them identifying explicitly with the 'anti-capitalist mobilisations' in the north and elsewhere in the south. However, there are vital questions over the nature of 'leadership' and of the 'working class' in South Africa. Desai and Pithouse (2003: 25) make a familiar argument about the collapse in the organising power of the working class:

clearly it is true that in a context where full-time employment is part of the everyday life of just one third of the African labour force, and with unemployment estimated as high as 45% ... the forms of solidarity that had once translated insertion in waged employment into popular expectations for citizenship and democracy are facing a slow and dramatic decline.

Similarly, on the question of leadership, there is often hostility to any organisational form regarded as 'Stalinist'. Certain activists of the Anti-Eviction Campaign eschew 'leadership' and advocate direct democracy (often under the influence of 'autonomism') instead. Ngwane (2003: 14) brilliantly summarises the main objections to this:

My concern is also that the ideology of no leadership means, by default, the principle of 'self-selection' and thus encourages a lack of accountability. There is also the danger of some social movements 'drowning in their own militancy' because of the failure or the refusal to develop long-term political projects in favour of immediate short-term militant actions.

These discussions reflect both the realities of South Africa's political transition since

the end of apartheid in 1994 and also, crucially, an interaction with the language and debates of ‘the anti-capitalism movement’ internationally. I would say that the counter conference and demonstrations organised against the United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (August 26-September 4, 2002) constituted, in effect, southern Africa’s Seattle – the explicit identification with a global movement centred on popular protest (see also Seddon and Zeilig, 2005).

These processes are not limited to South Africa; one of the most positive developments in Zimbabwe in the last two years has been the emergence of the Zimbabwe Social Forum. In 2004 the event was not simply a NGO jamboree, but included many activists who make direct links between their struggles and the international anti-globalisation movement, discussing a wide variety of issues that speak immediately of the transformation in southern Africa’s political economy. Sessions were held on AIDS, debt, youth politics and local government. The publication produced after the event – *Zim Forum Speaks* (2004) – makes these connections clear:

The ZSF was able to claim space for deeper solidarity and push the Zimbabwean civic movement towards a more definite struggle against social, economic and political injustice. The active participation by more than a thousand activists visibly enriched the motivation and confidence among those groups.

In this context Sachikonye (2004) is wrong to see anti-globalisation on the continent limited to a few NGOs and other groups. However, there is no real evidence of the emergence of an explicit ‘anti-capitalism’ in Senegal, other than in the press releases from a handful of NGOs.

This thesis has argued that ideas and organisations – the ‘ideological tools’ – are crucial elements in social change, and that the failure of these organisations and the ideological weaknesses of the movements discussed in the thesis, have contributed to the collapse of vibrant protest and activist movements into a dominant neo-liberalism. The agents of political transition must engage with some of the ideas emerging from the ‘anti-globalisation’ movement that reject the ‘Washington consensus.’ If students as part of the “reconvergence of popular forces” (Kagoro, interview, 23 June 2003) are to change their historical-geography, then the political direction and trajectory of popular protests in Africa must advance through an interchange across countries and even across

continents. The anti-capitalist movement (for all its weaknesses) offers the possibility for such an interchange. Across Africa as a whole, whether such a process takes place or not may be affected by the experience of South Africa's new social movements. It is vital, however, to be cautious. The extent to which South African social movements express a new opening for the renewal of social protest across the African continent is highly debatable. The nature of the movements sketched above has in many respects been extremely ephemeral, and they seem in many ways to have failed to evolve into a serious and systematic political opposition. This in itself, perhaps, expresses the low level of trade union activity (strike levels are very low), and the ideological confusion and divisions within the South African left, that have prevented groups who animated these movements from engaging critically with the ANC and COSATU. It is also the case that in South Africa, as elsewhere across the continent, there are other, arguably contending traditions of resistance and protest. As Seddon and Zeilig (2005: 24) have argued, there are:

traditions of resistance and protest, notably those which make use of religious commitment and community to engage in organised and orchestrated violent action, sometimes explicitly subversive and terrorist, which have demonstrated their vitality/virulence over the last decade.

Though a 'third wave' of popular protest might not have yet clearly emerged in Africa, the future success of social protest on the continent, as the basis for far-reaching progressive social, economic and political change will depend, in the opinion of this author, on the serious re-engagement by activists and political movements in Africa in both analysis and action at the grass-roots. This will depend in turn on both the practical and strategic needs of ordinary people and the exploration with them/by them of new forms of active engagement in the determination of their own futures, and also with the debates and discussions of the so-called 'anti-capitalist movement' in its other manifestations and on other continents. South Africa has demonstrated some of the ways that this dual engagement is possible. The student activists who have spoken in this thesis must heed the lessons emerging from these movements. In Zimbabwe there is evidence that this process is going on. Steve Biko – a student activist and ISO member in Harare – described the effects of the anti-capitalist demonstration on a core group of student militants in Zimbabwe:

I remember the excitement students had when there were demonstrations in Seattle and Genoa, and when our comrades went to South Africa for the WSSD summit last year (2002) ...when they came back they spoke of the international experience (Interview, 16 May 2003).

Although questions remain about the pattern of resistance and the nature of popular struggles in Africa, there is a sense that the debates that preoccupied so many people in the 1980s and 1990s – about a new diffuse post-colonial identity that had displaced class, resistance and liberation – have finally been shown to be somewhat beside the point. As Callinicos (2003: 13) writes:

less because of some decisive theoretical refutation of postmodernism (the most damaging philosophical critiques were produced during its heyday and seemed to have little effect on its influence) than because the world-wide rebellion against capitalist globalisation has changed the intellectual agenda.

Those who would wish to promote and spread that ‘world-wide rebellion’ must learn from the experiences of protest and resistance in Africa, and play close attention to the nature and composition of the popular forces that have emerged in recent years. The voice of students in this ‘reconvergence of forces’ is a vital witness to the reorganisation of protest and activism in sub-Saharan Africa.

8:4 Students of the transition speak

Students will continue to play contradictory and ambiguous roles in the movements that emerge across the continent. This will rest as it has always done on their peculiar status in society. On the question of elitism, student Jean-Claude Kondo illustrates this ambiguity:

If you think how few members of society actually gain access to university in Senegal ... students are privileged, they are in a better position to help and ultimately control the nation. But every student I know has the problem of money although students are here for themselves and for society in general.

Materially they certainly aren't a privileged class, that's not possible. I know a student with a scholarship who can't live at the university but has to live in the suburbs. The price of transport, accommodation everything, I know two students who committed suicide because life was impossible for them (Interview, 9 March 2001).

And like their predecessors, students often have an inflated idea of their role in society. Amadou Dieye Wade states:

The election of the president [Wade] was only possible with ... young people or students. During the launch of the campaign he toured the high schools and universities to get in touch with the students, to understand their needs. This is why we can say that President Wade owed his election to students and youth (Interview, 3 March 2001).

Yet the same students also have the capacity for unleashing political change which, if tied to wider social forces, can bring about these ‘transitions’. The origin of the MDC (once the great hope of the opposition in Zimbabwe – and the progressive left across southern Africa) emerged in large part because of the frenetic energy of the student movement. There is no better example of student militants than Jethro Mpfu. During the heady days before the MDC was created, Jethro was one of the key militants at the University of Zimbabwe. He refused to stand for office, preferring the ‘background’, and is remembered for his incredible capacity to galvanise students into action. As an Ndebele he was welcomed by a student movement that is often accused of being dominated by Shona activists. Interviewing him (and being arrested with him shortly afterwards) in 2003 was to hear an echo from the late 1990s of the political euphoria and hope that finally *chinja* (change) was coming. Jethro remembers the role of the student movement in this period of rapturous expectation:

There was a deliberate effort on the part of students to forge an alliance with the workers’ movement. So in my own humble judgement I’d say even the MDC was born out of the political efforts of the students at that time. I remember students urging the ZCTU to take political action against the government ... I put it to [Morgan Tsvangirai] that “ ... you ... help our hard working parents by leading them in the struggle against this government...” (Interview, 23 May 2003).

The agency is forgotten by the “enormous condescension of posterity” (Thompson, 1991: 12) and only the successful remembered. The voices of students – the crucial agents of this thesis – so often missing from the literature, will remain the best witness of student politics in sub-Saharan Africa and a guide to further action.

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- Sud Quotidien* (2000f) 'Entretien avec Idressa Seck' 22 February
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Appendix: List of interviews

Aborisade, Femi (2002) Lagos, Nigeria, 24 September
Antelava, Natalia (2001) Dakar, Senegal, 02 February
Ba, Cherif (2004) Dakar, Senegal, 12 February
Ba, Hamidou (2004) Dakar, Senegal, 28 January
Ba, Ibrahima (2004) Dakar, Senegal, 12 February
Biteye, Madiop (2004) Dakar, Senegal, 05 February
Bomba, John (2003) Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, 22 May; 30 July
Bomba, John (2005) Harare, Zimbabwe, 18 January
Chamisa, Nelson (2003) Harare, Zimbabwe, 08 August
Chimedza, Tinashe (2003) Harare, Zimbabwe, 27 May
Chitambure, Timothy (2001) London, England, 9 July
Choto, Tafadzwa (2001) London, England, 10 July
Dia, Assane (2004) Dakar, Senegal, 04 February
Diattara, Yankhoba (2004) Dakar, Senegal, 09 February
Diop, Alioune (2001) Dakar, Senegal, 04 March
Faye, Mor (2004) Dakar, Senegal, 05 February
Gassama, Idressa (2001) Dakar, Senegal, 04 February
Gumbo, Hopewell (2003) Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, 28 July
Kagoro, Brian (2003) Harare, Zimbabwe, 23 June
Kane, Coudy (2004) Dakar, Senegal, 14 February
Kanhema, Tawanda (2003) Harare, Zimbabwe, 05 June
Kasuwanga, Luke (2001) London, England, 9 July
Kongo, Jean Claude (2001) Dakar, Senegal, 03 March

Makunike, Brighton (2003) Harare, Zimbabwe, 26 May
Matsikidze, David (2003) Harare, Zimbabwe, 05/06/03
Mpofu, Jethro (2003) Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, 23 May
Mucheni, Commerie (2003) Harare, Zimbabwe, 09 June
Mutambara, Arthur (2003) Johannesburg, South Africa, 10 July
National Youth Service interviews (2003) Chegutu, Zimbabwe, 10-12 June
Ndiaye, Pape Birahim (2004) Dakar, Senegal, 18 February
Ndour, Oumy (2001) Dakar, Senegal, 9 March
Ndoye, Nar (2001) Dakar, Senegal, 11 March
University of Zimbabwe, Information Office, (2005) 06 March
Pajibo, Ezekiel (2003) Harare, Zimbabwe, 28 August
Philippa (not her real name) (2003) Harare, Zimbabwe, 14 June
Saurombe, Talkmore (2003) Harare, Zimbabwe, 05 June
Sene, Mbaye (2004) Dakar, Senegal, 11 February
Seydi, Yankhoba (2004) Dakar, Senegal, 18 March
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Sougou, Omar (2004) Saint Louis, Senegal, 13 March
Sow, Aliou (2004) Dakar, Senegal, 04 February
Toure, Meissa (2004) Dakar, Senegal, 15 March
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